

**EUROPEAN UNIONISTS : THE  
PARADOX OF NATIONALISM IN  
CONTEMPORARY SCOTLAND AND  
NORTHERN ITALY**

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**I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of  
research and composition undertaken solely by myself**

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## **ABSTRACT OF THESIS** (Submitted 30/4/96)

The thesis seeks to examine contemporary separatism in Scotland and Northern Italy, set within the European Union (EU). It asks to what extent these examples can be said to adhere to traditional theories of nationalism. It poses the question of how much labels such as 'nationalist' and 'federalist' can tell us of contemporary parties, given the context which an integrating Europe provides. The thesis aims to flesh out the paradox of concurrent pressure on Europe's established states from above and below, by examining sub-national movements in the supranational EU context.

The explicit focus of the thesis is a comparison of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Italian Northern League. These parties were chosen because they have not before been compared in such detail. They provide a good yardstick of the separatist spectrum, the former being perceived to be committed to an independent Scottish state, the latter to an autonomous, federal Italian North. The thesis situates both parties within a general analysis of old and new theories of nationalism and discusses the relevance of these within the contemporary EU. The thesis then examines the histories of both the Italian and British 'nation-states' and the emergence of both parties as electoral forces within these. The argument is made that, within the EU's supranational auspices, any differences in headline constitutional aim between the SNP and the League start to blur. Further analysis of the parties' policy pronouncements, voter profiles and activists' attitudes point to a more complex dynamic than terms such as 'nationalist' or 'federalist' can capture. Neither party has a fixed constitutional end but rather reacts to the prevailing political circumstances with ideological fluidity, so that neither can be said to seek a definitively nationalist or federalist solution. Both parties, however, seek to be part of the emerging, integrated European Union.

The thesis argues that at least some of the confusion concerning the nature of the SNP and the League stems from an over-stretching of terms. For instance 'nationalism' encompasses many very different strands and movements within its lexicon. The thesis examines a potential solution to the terminological problem posed, which comes through the concept of 'post-nationalism'. This term is of particular relevance in contemporary Europe, where there are concurrent attacks from both above and below the traditional 'nation-state' level. It is used as a starting-point for discussion rather than a definitive statement on terminology.

The thesis examines the argument that the European Union represents an unprecedented environment for the contemporary autonomist movements within it. The possibility is raised that full-scale independence, meaning the control of all economic, social and political levers of power, is a thing of the past in late twentieth century Europe. This prognosis seems to be confirmed by the favourable attitude toward European integration traced in both the League and the SNP. Instead, contemporary autonomy movements are driven by issues of accountability and democracy as the bargains and trade-offs which created and sustained the historic 'nation-states' increasingly break down. With on-going European integration, any success in the constitutional projects of the SNP or the Northern League will create autonomous units which immediately give away many powers to European institutions. The thesis argues that this phenomenon represents something novel in nationalist and federalist terms and needs to be recognised and studied as a paradox. It concludes that nationalism and federalism have been altered dramatically within the European Union, to the extent that a change in terminology may be the best method by which to capture the change in the aim and content of late twentieth century separatist parties, such as the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League.

## **CHAPTER ONE -**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Outline of Topic**

Nationalism, regionalism, federalism, independence and devolution are all prominent concepts in the contemporary political lexicon. They are the terms which make up the new political vocabulary being employed to explain the post-1989 world. They are held up as explanatory beacons but there is as yet little agreement as to what they are illuminating - whether the world is moving beyond the traditional nation-state or is hurtling back toward the worst excesses of nationalist prejudice. Is the economic power held by international financial markets making the nation-state truly redundant or instead causing a flight back toward smaller autonomous units? Can a people who express a national identity ever be truly satisfied with only a form of autonomy within another, perhaps supranational, state? It is questions such as these which dominate the view for the student of nationalism in the 1990s.

This study aims to be ambitious. It seeks to help answer at least some of the above questions by studying two Western European variants of the 'autonomist' phenomenon, namely Scotland and Northern Italy. Autonomy will be the term used to encompass the diverse nationalist, federalist and devolutionist aspirations of the players involved. The central aim of the study will be to establish how similar or different the projects of the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League are and from this to move toward a definition of nationalism which is based not on the nineteenth century creation of nation-states but rather addresses the European reality of the late twentieth century. Indeed developments within the life-span of this thesis have shown that both parties lie within the auspices of nationalism on all but the narrowest of definitions. The task here is to illuminate the content and context of the late twentieth century European Union variant of this phenomenon.



Many similarities exist between Scotland and Northern Italy. Both areas have substantial electoral forces gathered beneath the banner (or banners in the Scottish case) of autonomy through political parties which try to harness the identities of these voters to their specific cause. Both have seen an incremental breakdown in the faith placed in the centralised state to solve localised problems. Both the SNP and the Northern League have used the renewed European integration of the 1980s to couch their appeal for autonomy in terms of European Union subsidiarity<sup>1</sup>. However, in seeking to learn more about nationalism in general the differences between these two areas will prove equally instructive. On the one hand is the meandering history of Scottish nationalism which after 250 years of 'negotiated compromise'<sup>2</sup> within the British state, acquired an overtly political form in the late 1960s with the SNP by-election success in Hamilton and has remained a force since then.<sup>3</sup> On the other is the Northern League which grew spectacularly from its origins as an ethno-cultural movement in the north-eastern Veneto region in 1979 to become the largest party in the Italian Chamber of Deputies after the March 1994 general election and the crucial player in bringing down Silvio Berlusconi's governing coalition in December 1994. Contrary to most expectations the League emerged from the 1996 elections as the largest party in the Italian North with its vote-share above 10% for the first time and significantly increased from both the 1992 and 1994 elections.<sup>4</sup> The former

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis subsidiarity will be taken to mean the principle of governing units being those most suited to the issue involved, as discussed in the preamble to the "Treaty on European Union" in which the then twelve member states "Resolved to continue the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity." See Commission of the European Communities (1992) p.4.

<sup>2</sup> A phrase coined by Lindsay Paterson in 'Ane end to ane auld sang - Sovereignty and the Renegotiation of the Union' L. Paterson (1991) pp.104-122.

<sup>3</sup> The SNP had briefly held the neighbouring Motherwell seat when they broke the war-time party truce to fight a by-election in 1945, but the seat won by then leader, Robert McIntyre, was lost at the general election later that same year - see T. Gallagher (1991) "Nationalism in the Nineties" p.9.

<sup>4</sup> In the 1996 election, the League ran candidates in all regions north of Lazio which is where Rome is situated, however there is a clear dividing line between the Northern regions - Piedmont, Lombardy, Trentino Alto-Adige, the Veneto, Friuli Venezia-Giulia and Liguria where the League's vote was well into double figures and the central regions of Tuscany,

claims to mobilise a Scottish identity which has been developed, debated and refined over almost three hundred years of Union, whilst the latter has re-invoked identities thought to be buried in the Middle Ages. If these diverse circumstances can precipitate similar political solutions then a comparison of the two should yield some insight into contemporary autonomist sentiment.

However the comparison will not only look at the macro level of the political parties, indeed the contention will be that to truly understand this contemporary phenomenon we must gain as much knowledge as possible about the sociological make-up of the movements and the relevant identities of those who adhere to them, for as Eric Hobsbawm makes clear in the introduction to his study of nationalism, nations are:

“...dual phenomena, constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people..”<sup>5</sup>

Nationalist aspiration can thus be seen as a dialogue between those above - the political classes - and those below - the population. This study will attempt to relate the two by looking at the manner in which identities and interests are used by the two parties concerned to maximise their appeal within the complex matrix of voting which every elector employs. It will focus specifically on the way in which political parties can use national identities to increase their own legitimacy, a process which Martin Clark believes can be extended to a general law which he calls the ‘Metternich principle’, thus:

“...regions will always remain mere ‘geographical expressions’ unless the elites within them can harness popular disaffection to pseudo-nationalist sentiment.”<sup>6</sup>

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Umbria and the Marche where it has a very marginal presence polling 1 or 2% of the vote, whilst in between these two it reached 7.2% in Emilia-Romagna. The national figure then is misleading to the extent that it spreads the League’s votes across all twenty Italian regions, whereas depending on which regions one includes its share of the vote rises to between 15 and 25%. A map of Italy’s regions is included as Appendix II to help any reader unfamiliar with Italy’s internal geography.

<sup>5</sup> E.J.Hobsbawm (1992) “Nations and Nationalism Since 1780 - Programme, Myth, Reality” p.10.

<sup>6</sup> M. Clark (1975) ‘Italy : Regionalism & Bureaucratic Reform’ from J. Cornford (ed.) “The Failure of the State” p.77 Footnote.

The extent to which such identities are successfully mobilised by the modern autonomy parties under consideration will be one of the central questions of the thesis.

The study may seem to come along after the 'nation-state' horse has bolted the theoretical stable to those who concur with the extensive literature on the decline of the nation-state as a relevant unit in the international polity, the theories of globalisation, supra-nationalism and post-nationalism being just three amongst those which will be discussed in Chapter Two. However, in the study of politics one must be constrained by societal, and not merely theoretical, realities. Thus it is not enough merely to posit the economic and security dimensions of inter-national co-operation as proof of the declining significance of the autonomous nation or region. Instead one must explore the apparently paradoxical tendencies of growing super-nationalism and concurrent intra-national autonomism. One must seek to explain why as the European Union continues to widen and deepen, albeit, in its traditional sporadic fashion, several of its member states are simultaneously seeing their governing unity undergo fierce internal challenge. This thesis will argue that the two processes are interconnected, indeed the backdrop of the European Union is crucial in understanding the Scottish National Party and the Northern League and it will be argued that its presence has greatly influenced the content of their respective brands of autonomism.

In this light, nationalism and regionalism remain very potent forces and millions of people give great personal salience to their identity and crave control over devolved political institutions. In the 1996 elections the League received the preference vote of just under four million voters in the PR part of the Italian ballot whilst in 1992 the SNP took 21.5 % of the Scottish vote or over 500,000 ballots were cast for them under a system in which they had realistic chances of victory in only a small number



of seats. These voters may then feel that their 'official' nation-state is increasingly powerless in the global village, especially in the European Union which through its various treaty obligations demands much surrender of sovereignty as the price of membership. However there is a large question over the compatibility of sub- and supra-national tendencies, namely that newly victorious nationalists are unlikely to wish to give up all their hard-won powers immediately. Once achieved the desire for autonomy, then, is still a powerful force for many both above and below and Michael Ignatieff has summed up the misplaced analysis of those who proclaim it dead :

“With blithe lightness of mind, we assumed that the world was moving irrevocably beyond nationalism, beyond tribalism, beyond the provincial confines of the identities inscribed in our passports, towards a global market culture which was to be our new home. In retrospect we were whistling in the dark. The repressed has returned, and its name is nationalism.”<sup>7</sup>

This is a proclamation which stands in contrast to the opinion of Eric Hobsbawm who sees the ideology of nationalism as increasingly irrelevant in the economic vacuum which nation-states inhabit in the contemporary global economy, although both could be said to be reactionary in different ways. Francis Fukuyama went so far as to famously proclaim 'the end of history' in the sense that the ideological battles of the twentieth century had been won by liberal democracy, with nationalism relegated to a side issue.<sup>8</sup> However such views appear to forget Hobsbawm's dictum quoted above, for they omit to bring in the feelings of those creating the nation from below. Nowhere is this more clear than in Hobsbawm's analysis of Quebec.

He sees the nationalism which has emerged in the French-speaking Canadian province as parochial in the extreme. It puts up weak barriers to irresistible global

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<sup>7</sup> M.Ignatieff (1993a) "Blood and Belonging - Journeys into the New Nationalism" p.2.

<sup>8</sup> F.Fukuyama (1989) 'The End of History' in which he says (p.15) "While they may constitute a source of conflict for liberal societies, this conflict does not arise from liberalism itself so much as from the fact that the liberalism in question is incomplete. Certainly a great deal of the world's ethnic and nationalist tension can be explained in terms of peoples who are forced to live in unrepresentative political systems that they have not chosen."

trends hiding behind the barrier of French language and so avoids the globalisation of the international polity. It is, in short, a misguided project which he sums up thus:

“..the stance of Quebec nationalism is that of a people in headlong retreat before historical forces which threaten to overwhelm it; a movement whose advances are viewed in terms of political weakness rather than as success.”<sup>9</sup>

However Ignatieff who spent a month travelling around the province where he grew up as an Anglophone presents a very different analysis of the Quebec situation, more rooted in empirical observations. Far from retreat, many Quebecois see their national project as a step forward. The business elite which broadly backs the Parti Quebecois at the provincial level and overwhelmingly voted for its sister organisation, the Bloc Quebecois, in the 1993 federal election, sees nationhood as both conferring identity and completing the economic emancipation of Quebec, begun in the post-war boom period. Ignatieff identifies the sense that where Quebecers used to view Quebec as their nation and Canada as their state, the province's 'Quiet Revolution' has conferred a sense of being able to make it on their own both economically and politically. Much of the impetus to follow economic with political emancipation stems from the perceived failure of Canada as a viable unit of government, as McRoberts & Postgate make clear:

“For many Quebecois, however, adoption of the goal of sovereignty seems to have sprung less from attraction to the institutions of sovereignty themselves than from dissatisfaction with the status quo, whether that was the functioning of the federal system or the particular policies adopted by Ottawa.”<sup>10</sup>

This anti-centre attitude is one which finds much resonance amongst contemporary Scots and Northern Italians, as Chapter Four will make clear through electoral and poll data from the last two decades.

This digression on Quebec is instructive as it illustrates the danger of not examining the empirical reality of a given nation or region within a nation before making one's judgements. Thus Hobsbawm whilst citing his allegiance to Ernest Gellner's much

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<sup>9</sup> E.J.Hobsbawm (1992) op. cit. p.171.

<sup>10</sup> K. McRoberts & D. Postgate (1988) "Quebec : Social Change & Political Crisis" p.261.

quoted definition of nationalism, that: "Nationalism is primarily a political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent."<sup>11</sup> should also have remembered Benedict Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community'<sup>12</sup> which posits that since we can never know the strangers who make up a nation with us, we imagine what we have in common and through these shared imaginings all the strangers become citizens of the given 'national' community. It is clear that with the Bloc Quebecois the official opposition in Ottawa after the 1993 federal elections that the imaginings of many ordinary citizens still conceive of Quebec as a nation and they find political congruence with a party prepared to push this demand - above and below then are coalescing. To dismiss Quebec nationalism as somehow a weak response to globalisation appears not only hasty but very dismissive of Gellner's definition of congruence between the political and national unit. Hobsbawm's argument would say that with super-national economic structures, such as the North American Free-Trade Association (NAFTA), now in place any autonomist movement will be debilitated. However, in the first federal election after the free-trade agreement, Quebec signalled a strong desire to manage its own affairs within this trading bloc. The crucial questions to be answered are whether the developments in Scotland and Northern Italy mirror those of Quebec and if so, whether they can be said to represent a new kind of autonomous nationalism which moves beyond the traditional definitions of the nation-state.

## **1.2 Overview of Chapters**

These questions will be addressed through a variety of methods over the ensuing chapters, which will combine a theoretical discussion with empirical evidence. The next chapter will examine in detail the established theories of nationalism in the

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<sup>11</sup> E.Gellner (1983) "Nations and Nationalism" p.1.

<sup>12</sup> B. Anderson (1983) "Imagined Communities - Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism".

context of current evidence of their breakdown, especially as regards the European Union. It will argue that a national identity is not a static variable against which economic and social factors are played out. Rather identity is a dynamic process which can shift dramatically over time and within individuals. It will also examine the apparent difficulties of comparing the 'nation' of Scotland against the 'region' of the North of Italy (termed by the League as *Padania* and since 1995 referred to as the *NordNazione* or 'North-nation'<sup>13</sup>.) by arguing that all 'nation-states' are to an extent mythologized and invented. Paterson's idea of 'constant negotiation' is a much more historically accurate one than any hegemonic, static conception. Indeed the fluidity of the terminology has been graphically illustrated within the time-span of this PhD thesis from 1993 to 1996 with the League's shift from a strong form of federalism to an explicit secessionist platform in the 1996 elections. Chapter Three will continue the development of these themes through an in-depth historical analysis of the supposedly unitary British and Italian states. The myths of a homogeneous nation-state will be deconstructed, through highlighting the limited nature of the elites in both countries who embraced unity and the concurrent lack of impact on most of the population in the pre-industrial society of Great Britain in 1707 and the largely agrarian Italy of the 1860s. Analysis will be made of the extent to which both London and Rome (capital of the unified Italy from 1870) positively sought to reinforce their national unity and negatively 'absorbed' any perceived threats. The underlying contention of these two chapters will be that the concept of the 'nation-state' is a useful hegemon for theorists but that their reality is most often much more heterogeneous. Chapter Four will further this argument by analysing the emergence

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<sup>13</sup> 1995 saw an explicit flirtation with independence by the League with the concept of 'the Nation of the North' or '*NordNazione*' as it sought to re-establish a distinctive identity and to break away from its failure to force Rome to make federalist concessions; as the Secretary of the Lombard League was quoted as saying in October 1995 "We have seen that the path to federalism which goes through the Roman parliament is closed to us, the other which carries us on to the Nation of the North lies ahead." [*La Repubblica*, 10/10/95] p.13. This departure was made more tangible by the successful campaign on a secessionist platform during the 1996 general election.



of the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League as symptoms of this lack of hegemony.

Chapters Five and Six will then test these contentions by looking in detail at the Scottish National Party and the Northern League over the last two decades, aiming to provide a profile of each party's voters, sympathisers and activists. This will involve the marrying of quantitative electoral and survey data with a limited set of qualitative interviews with party activists in both countries. These interviews will aim to create a snapshot of the attitudes of those who are actually carrying the autonomy message to the electorate - the party cadre who are the vital hinge between the above and below of any political party. They will be used to gauge issues of identity, motive for activism, agreement or disagreement with party leadership and more generally attitudes to centralisation, economics, and the European dimension which both parties profess. Interviews with activists were preferred to those with the party hierarchy whom it was felt were more likely to repeat the party line and generally display less candour because of their responsibilities.

The final two chapters will consist of a synthesis of the various strands of analysis in Chapter Seven, followed by the thesis' conclusion in Chapter Eight. These chapters will attempt to show that the contemporary phenomena of supranationalism and sub-national autonomism are interrelated processes tied to the decline of the traditional nation-state as a legitimate unit of government. Within the European Union context, the old theoretical divisions between regions and nations are becoming less and less relevant as we approach the millennium. The real issue is now accountability in government and identities are being used as one means to achieving that end. Whether they will trump other competing identities and which aspects of them come to the fore depends still on the specific circumstances but they can be taken as emblematic of a new political discourse which no longer sits comfortably in the old

immutable theories. The thesis hopes to help in the ongoing process of understanding these new forms of nationalism by addressing them as they are, and not how we might expect them to be from the textbooks.

### **1.3 Research Design**

The research design employed seeks to provide evidence for the contentions raised by a combination of quantitative secondary data sources and qualitative interviews with activists as outlined above. The interviews are not sufficient in number to stand alone but their contents contain many comments which will be used to back up assertions and statements to be made in the different chapters of the thesis and most explicitly in Chapter Six as part of an analysis of the parties in question. The interviews conducted comprised the most important primary research of the thesis and as such provide an important part of the overall project as the commentary in Appendix I makes clear.

It is useful to situate the interviews in an overall research design framework:

"Research design is the point at which questions raised in theoretical or policy debates are converted into operational research projects and research programmes which will provide answers to these questions."<sup>14</sup>

The key questions to be answered by the research design proposed here are whether the autonomist movements in the European Union of the late twentieth century are qualitatively different from previous such manifestations and how similar or different the projects of the SNP and the League are. The thesis contends that the traditional theories of nationalism no longer possess explanatory power in analysing the two cases to be closely considered, those of Scotland and Northern Italy. Indeed it will argue that both the Scottish National Party and the Northern League can be best understood as reactions to the type of centralising nation-states which were the

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<sup>14</sup> C. Hakim (1987) "Research Design - Strategies and Choices in the Design of Social Research" Preface p.xi.

cornerstone of traditional nationalism. Neither of these movements fits well into the traditional left-right ideological spectrum. Nor are their electorates sociologically homogeneous. Thus it will be argued that these contemporary nationalisms can be best understood as heterogeneous movements rather than hegemonic ideological parties, an analysis which draws on the work of the Italian sociologist, Alberto Melucci:

"The ethno-national question must be seen.....as containing a *plurality* of meanings that cannot be reduced to a *single core*. It contains ethnic identity, which is a weapon of revenge against centuries of discrimination and new forms of exploitation; it serves as an instrument for applying pressure in the political market and it is a response to needs for personal and collective identity in highly complex societies." <sup>15</sup>

Melucci terms these three different strands the historical-cultural, the political-instrumental and the psycho-social. The approach adopted will be to devise methods of gauging how much evidence is present for these different aspects both above and below, namely how obvious are the parties' uses of history and its perceived injustices, the pragmatic harnessing of identity to the party and the sense of belonging instilled and played on by the parties. The thesis aims to identify and quantify these different factors, for only by providing evidence for all three levels will the hypothesis which will be developed of complex, 'post'-national movements gain validity. How best can the different elements be operationalised?

The historical part of the research will rely on secondary readings supplemented by the available data on identities. It will be argued that in both Scotland and Northern Italy there is a distinctive 'identity' which plays a substantial role in the rhetoric of both the Scottish National Party and the Northern League but which remains within the context of long-established, dual identities. There have been several measurements of Scottish/British dual identity and use will be made of these data sources, along with the substantial literature on Scotland's history in the Union. As

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<sup>15</sup> A. Melucci (1989) "Nomads of the Present - Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society" p.90 Emphasis added.

for Italy with its shorter unified period and more recent emergence of the leagues, more reliance will have to be placed on secondary, historical evidence, although some more explicit quantitative data has been located and an explicit identity question was carried out amongst the activists interviewed, albeit on a very limited basis. It will be argued that due to the lack of substantial religious or linguistic (although dialect can be said to play a role in both) differences, that the historical-cultural strand of these two modern movements is less important in Scotland or Northern Italy than it is say in Quebec or Catalonia, both of which are often cited as similar cases, but it remains a powerful mobilising factor in both areas.

The party-political side of the research design focuses on the 'above' element, looking at the electoral manifestations of the claimed novel phenomenon. Concentration, then, must be on the differences which may be drawn between these and more, traditional nationalist expressions. Much use will be made of the substantial poll data available on the sociological make-up of both parties' cohorts of supporters - the evidence comes from 'below'. The vital components which I will seek to elucidate here are : from which other parties voters have defected, how disaffected they feel with the traditional nation-state and how much importance they attach to the 'identity/autonomy' element of the League and the SNP.

Another important element in gauging the extent of new nationalist politics is the position of the parties as held up by its practitioners. This will be analysed by a close analysis of both parties' literature and pamphlets since the 1980s with a particular emphasis on the anti-centralist strands of this rhetoric. Study will be made of the electoral rationale behind any substantive changes in policy stance, for example the SNP's replacement of 'Free Scotland Now' to its 'Independence in Europe' stance and the League's shift from a 'Republic of the North' to three 'macroregions', and current move to full-scale independence.



The political nature of identity politics will be examined with use being made of the available sociological data on party support. Electoral motivations will be analysed and the degree of fit into various models of voting behaviour will be assessed. To supplement these investigations I will use the twenty-eight interviews conducted with activists, who provide the vital link between the above and below for any political party. Without a cadre of committed voters who become willing to work for the party and give freely of their time to promote its message, it is dubious that any beyond marginal, electoral success can be achieved. Time and resources limited the number of interviews I was able to conduct but even with my small sample size, there is much richness and they very definitely provide a snapshot of party sentiment as of the middle months of 1995. The Scottish side of this fieldwork was conducted around the Central Belt region largely for reasons of self-selection but given the concentration of parliamentary seats in this area and the competition between the SNP and the Labour Party in most of the urban constituencies, this is an important area to look at. It is a cause of regret that I got no reply from the more rural constituencies which provide another strong source of SNP support. On the Italian side, my research centred around Lombardy and the Veneto the electoral heartland of the Northern League and before that the birthplace of the Lombard and Venetian Leagues in areas strong with former subcultural identity votes, both Christian Democrat and Socialist.

Prior to the interviews, it seemed that it would be difficult to obtain a degree of consistency when using two different languages. I decided that to maximise the reliability of interviews conducted in English and Italian it was salient to use highly structured interviews in which the questions were virtually straight translations. I was aware, however, that too structured an approach could create artificial answers simply from the expectations created by my questions. Thus in the end the interviews

were semi-structured, I had a list of questions which were identical in both languages and these formed the core of the process, but if the interviewee said something which was worth pursuing I was prepared to follow this line and then return to the structured interview - an approach which I believe has provided for comparison between the two sets of data without constraining its content to an unacceptable degree.

The interviews were used in the research as a supplement to the statistical data gleaned from opinion polls and election surveys. This data provides the 'social situation'<sup>16</sup> of those to be interviewed and together with the party literature and secondary analysis proposed provides the 'broader programme'<sup>17</sup> of research. However given the hypothesis to be tested by this empirical research and the investigation of both the 'above' and 'below' of contemporary autonomist politics, such interviews provide an important qualitative element, as Kirk and Miller point out:

"Even when the quantitative reliability of survey research is essential to the research goal, the additional perspective of qualitative research is useful as a rule for assuring validity."<sup>18</sup>

The small numbers involved mean that the respondents cannot be taken as representative even though I exerted as much care as possible in their selection, but the evidence elucidated from these interviews will increase the validity of any conclusions reached by more quantitative methods. People's self-definitions of social situations and movements are important, if incomplete, explanatory tools of the social process under analysis, as Hakim says:

"The question 'why' often cannot be asked, or answered, directly and may involve a variety of circumstantial and contextual factors creating links between, or choices between, apparently unrelated matters. Whether one is seeking explanations at the social-structural level, or at the level of individual choices and life styles, qualitative research can be extremely valuable for identifying patterns of associations between factors on the

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<sup>16</sup> R. G. Burgess (1984) "In The Field" p. 102.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> J. Kirk & M.L.Miller (1986) "Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research" p. 29.

ground, as compared with abstract correlations obtained from the analysis of large scale surveys and aggregate data."<sup>19</sup>

Thus the answers obtained in the interviews provide an important control mechanism for any hypotheses made from the other strands of analysis. This qualitative analysis will be used as a supplement to the other forms of analysis undertaken. However the issue of quantitative analysis is by no means uncomplicated itself with considerable differences in the evolution and electoral environments of the Northern League and the Scottish National Party. A specific problem was caused by the differences in the data-sets available on the two, particularly regarding questions of personal identity amongst the electorate. Put simply, there has not yet been enough research on the phenomenon of the Leagues, although the data which was located provided a rich source of evidence. It is hoped that this PhD will contribute to a body of comparative research on this party.

It should be stressed that this quantitative analysis does not stand alone as the empirical evidence for my hypothesis. It is part of an integrated research design precisely because of the type of problem which may arise and cripple a uni-dimensional methodology. Coupled as it is with qualitative interviews and literature analysis, the quantitative research proposed will form a large part of the evidence for the hypothesis proffered. All three strands of analysis are inter-related in a triangulated structure and one example of the cross-checks is the use of a linear-identity scale in the interviews where the interviewee was asked to place his or herself on a line which will have Scottish and British at its ends in the first case and Northern and Italian in the second. I then asked the respondents to explain the place they marked and after the interviews can measure the distance from the relevant end-point and so gain some further information on a linear scale on dual identities

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<sup>19</sup> C. Hakim (1987) *op. cit.* p.28.

already analysed in the more traditional question form. It is hoped that the research design employed, with the checks and balances outlined, provides an appropriate mechanism for exploring the thesis' contentions.

#### **1.4 Comparative Issues & Controversies**

The most important consideration implicit in the foregoing discussion of possible problems is the issue of comparison and control. The initial reaction of many people to the proposed comparative research is that the areas chosen are more different than similar. Many perceive the Northern League as a right-wing baronial revolt which aims to rid the prosperous North of the albatross of the *Mezzogiorno*. Much has been made of the elements of anti-Southern and anti-immigrant rhetoric in some of its propaganda to brand the party as far-right and group it with the French 'Front Nationale', German Republican Party or the British National Party.. The Scottish National Party is in contrast often portrayed as a reaction to Scotland's junior role in the British Union, and while Hechter's 'internal colonialism' model has been largely discredited by the economic facts, Scotland is still portrayed to be a victim of South-East centrality and dominance. Moreover the SNP is most often portrayed as a leftist party seeking considerable social re-distribution. There has also been a general academic and journalistic pigeon-holing of the SNP as 'nationalist' and the League as 'federalist' with the concomitant assumption that they are therefore too constitutionally and ideologically diverse to be compared.

This study will contend that these interpretations are overly narrow. They are the product of thinking which seeks to place every political party at a specific point on the left-right spectrum and which wants to categorise all parties as belonging to a particular family of political ideology. The proposed research does not set out with any such *a priori* assumptions, rather it will treat both the League and SNP as



heterogeneous, complex movements which may or may not fit the 'conventional wisdom' expounded above.

In this light the Northern League could also be portrayed as a progressive party in terms of its attitude to Europe - it wants power transferred from the nation-state to the regions under Brussels auspices. In the 1994 election campaign the League's leader, Umberto Bossi, was very deliberate to distance himself from the authoritarian centralism of the 'National Alliance' (formerly the neo-fascist MSI)<sup>20</sup>. Latterly Bossi drove a wedge between the League and the *Forza Italia* movement of Silvio Berlusconi who Bossi has characterised as simply the Christian Democrats in disguise. In the aftermath of the 1996 election much has been made of the League's possible bargain with the centre-left 'Olive Tree' alliance of Romano Prodi, hardly the action of a rabid right-wing, xenophobic party. The study will seek to show that the League is no simplistic right-wing, protest party and that its followers have been drawn from all social and political segments, drawing on such studies as that conducted into the Lombard League by Renato Mannheimer and his colleagues.<sup>21</sup> Likewise the SNP should not be viewed too simplistically for whilst its current leadership have couched their message in centre-left terms, their membership and electorate is by no means solidly aligned behind this pole and there have been considerably divergent platforms in the past, which could well resurface in an autonomous Scotland.

Another issue which will be discussed at length at the outset of the thesis is the regionalism versus nationalism controversy, for it could be contended that the SNP and the League are manifestations of very different types of sentiment,

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<sup>20</sup> When asked if he would rather push Fini (leader of the National Alliance) or Occhetto (leader of the former communist Party of Democratic Socialism) off an unspecified tower, he uncategorically replied the former and he refused to sit at the same table as him during their nine-month joint membership of the 'pole of liberty' [La Repubblica, 10/3/94]p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> R. Mannheimer (1991) "La Lega Lombarda".

notwithstanding the shift by the League toward secession in the 1996 Italian election campaign already outlined. However the argument to be proposed here will be that the external conditions and internal dynamics of late twentieth century movements which seek autonomy for a defined territory are such that the similarities between the two are greater than the differences. This discussion will prefigure the hypothesis to be developed concerning qualitative differences in contemporary nationalism becoming blurred. It will be argued that the perceived differences in constitutional end are not very clear-cut as shown by analyses of the parties' declared aims, the desires of the electorate and the wishes of their activists.

There will be no a priori assumptions made as to where on any given political spectrum the two parties stand. Rather taking the hypothesis that both are signs of movements of contemporary autonomist sentiment, as many points of comparison as possible will be used to test this theorem. Of course some decisions do have to be made by the researcher, as Melucci points out, "Obviously, the choice of observations and images to be fed back cannot be entirely neutral; out of necessity it involves some subjective criteria."<sup>22</sup> However by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and by explicitly seeking to measure the degree of mesh between 'above' and 'below' it is hoped that the comparison to be undertaken will yield the maximum possible validity through the 'control-oriented' approach outlined. A final word should be included on the issue of the narrowness of the overall study. In an ideal environment I would seek to include other examples of contemporary autonomist sentiment such as Quebec, Catalonia or Euskadi in the comparison to be undertaken. However the doctorate must be framed within the context of constraints imposed by time and resources, and as such including a third or fourth region with a different language and location would be too ambitious, though this is not to say that future work in this realm should not be undertaken.

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<sup>22</sup> A. Melucci (1989) *op. cit.* p.250.

### 1.5 Aim of Thesis

This study seeks to compare the two areas under consideration by setting out to assess realistically the similarities and the differences between the emergence of the League in Italy and the expansion of the Scottish National Party and the concomitant embracing of devolution in Scotland by the Labour and Liberal parties. The study will be conducted in the glare of realism, a realism which recognises the large differences between the recent Conservative hegemony in the United Kingdom and the breathtaking volatility of Italian politics.<sup>23</sup> It is a realism which explores beneath the surface of the 'nationalist' SNP and the 'federalist' Northern League, looking at the gradualist/fundamentalist split in the SNP in the context of a strongly neo-nationalist dominant party and also considers the split in the League which Berlusconi's fall brought between pro- and anti- *Forza Italia* factions (the latter of which has dominated and risen phoenix-like in the 1996 election on the wings of secession); a realism which considers the constraints placed on the League by its elevation after 1992 to a position of potential and the actual governing responsibility and the difficulties faced by the SNP in playing the Westminster game too closely such as their voting with the government on an issue regarding representation in the EU Committee of the Regions in March 1993. The contention to be probed and tested is that the similarities outweigh the differences and that by studying the two areas at the same time, we can learn much about what nationalism means within the auspices of the contemporary Europe. The conclusion will aim toward a definition of this phenomenon, marrying the sub- and supra-national developments and making comprehensible any connection between the two.

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<sup>23</sup> After the January 1995 dissolution of the formerly fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) through its absorption within Gianfranco Fini's National Alliance (AN), no party which fought the 1987 European election or 1989 general election remains united under the same name, although several survive as splinter groups (such as a rump MSI) or having been co-opted by another organisation, such as the Lombard League being swallowed up by the Northern League umbrella.

The research will be informed throughout by the idea that there is never one definitive explanation of different nationalisms and national identities, because quite simply these can mean many different things to different people at the same time and in the same imagined 'nation'. It rejects the premise that there are definitive types of autonomism which sees nationalism as clearly segmented from regionalism and federalism, preferring the idea of different aspects of a single phenomenon. As such, the research design must be aimed at creating a bag of explanatory tools which allow us to understand better all the different aspects of modern autonomism rather than the monolithic approach employed by commentators such as Eric Hobsbawm who seek to homogenise all nationalisms for their own explanatory purposes, for example: "What I am saying is that, in spite of its evident prominence, nationalism is historically less important...It is at most a complicating factor."<sup>24</sup> This sweeping type of view, as pointed out earlier in this Introduction, ignores the very sentiments of those below which Hobsbawm himself highlighted as an important factor in building nationalism. His analysis is overly tied to the terms of the traditional nation-state, the aim here is to address the empirical realities of the late twentieth century and for the Northern League and the Scottish National Party that reality means the novel context of an integrating Europe.

This study has to advance beyond such orthodoxy if it is to capture the reality of contemporary autonomisms, and their connection with the crisis of the traditional nation-state. The proposed methodology will look concurrently at the above and below of autonomy politics, while bearing in mind Brand's rider, that:

"..there is no certainty that electors support parties because of their programmes. In any case, humans extract from events and statements meanings which are relevant to themselves. These meanings may have little to do with the intentions of those responsible for the events and statements."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm (1992) op. cit. p.191.

<sup>25</sup> J. Brand et. al. (1992) 'Third Parties and the British System : The Nature of the SNP' pp.2-3.



There comes a point, however, when to understand adherence to any political movement we have to assume some concurrence between individuals' beliefs and the positions proffered by a particular party. It is the contention of this author that all human beings seek belonging and to reconcile their own self-conceptions and values with the need to belong to a community, even if this imagined community is never entirely static. In the context of the breakdown of the 'catch-all' parties of the right and left and the crisis of legitimacy present in many European nation-states, this study seeks to discover, if and why the sentiments of territory, ethnicity and community provide the best way out.

This sense of belonging and identity and the degree to which they are electorally acted upon are the crucial variables to be measured in the proposed research. It is hoped that by marrying empirical quantitative and qualitative data to the substantial literature on both movements that a better understanding of the forces driving the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League will be gained, and that the conclusions thus reached shed some light on the shadows currently surrounding much of contemporary autonomist sentiment in an integrating Europe.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**OLD AND NEW THEORIES -**  
**TRADITIONAL NATIONALISM IN A MODERN CONTEXT**

**2.1 The Context of the European Union**

The Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League are far from identical parties. Certainly for the first half of the 1990s the former could be characterised as seeking independence from the other parts of the United Kingdom and envisaging Scotland as a small but stable European nation on the Scandinavian model, with seats at the United Nations and membership of the European Union. The latter wanted to replace the Rome-centric Italian polity with devolved macro-regions in which only monetary policy, coin and note issue and security matters would be left at the centre. Its favourite models are those of the prosperous German Lander within the European Union or autonomous Swiss cantons for the more Euro-sceptical activists, though as reported in Chapter One, the 1996 election saw the League assume a position much closer to that of the SNP with a secessionist platform. Indeed within these large canvasses it will be argued that much of the detail is similar : the broad strokes of rhetoric may differ but the overall intent does not vary greatly. While the SNP has a prominent dichotomy between those who want to pass straight to independence ('the fundamentalists') and those who see a devolved Scottish assembly as a precursor to full-blown independence ('the gradualists'),<sup>26</sup> the Northern League itself has endured considerable internal strife over the extent of the demands made by the party ranging from a full-scale Northern Republic to a

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<sup>26</sup> Though the leadership of Alex Salmond has seen this rift bridged to an extent unimaginable a few years ago, as highlighted by the ease with which Salmond's 'stepping stone' policy was adopted at 1995's SNP conference, summed up by Iain MacWhirter (1995) in his article 'Doomsday Two : the Return of Forsyth' : "Despite forecasts of splits and divisions, the remarkable thing about this year's SNP conference was how quiescent the fundamentalist faction was. There was scarcely a murmur at the party adopting a strategy that would have been dismissed as unionist defeatism only a few years ago." (p.26).

federalising stance and back to talk again of secession because federalism has not been delivered by the Roman centre. Indeed with the breakaway of the faction led by former interior minister Roberto Maroni in January 1995, following the resignation of chief intellectual, Gianfranco Miglio, in April 1994<sup>27</sup>, the SNP's internal arguments look inconsequential. The question which this chapter will answer is to what extent do the similarities and differences between the parties matter?

This will be tackled by a thorough review of the literature on nationalism and identity, asking to what extent one or both examples can be said to hold true to the generalisations developed there. Given the geographic situation and pro-European orientation of both movements, this discussion must take place in the context of the European Union. This organisation provides an exceptional backdrop to any modern European autonomist movement, because never before in the story of nation-building or nationalist projects has there been such a supra-national organisation in which the sovereignty and integrity of their traditional goal - the nation-state - has been compromised before the achievement of that aim. Previously, nationalist movements in Europe aimed for maximalist powers within their own borders; in fact that was part of the very definition of the nation-state. But in the current context any new-born nation which becomes a member of the European Union will immediately yield much of its sovereign power. It has no option as to which organisation it adheres to (unless it follows the example of Norway or Switzerland which is neither party's policy), as Jacques Delors, the retired President of the European Commission makes perfectly clear in his book on France's relationship within Europe : "The EC has become the one and only reference point for the sharing of sovereignty by great

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<sup>27</sup> Maroni broke away because he felt the League had been too quick to desert the government of Silvio Berlusconi; Miglio for quite the opposite reason, namely that the League's politicians were too quick to cavort with the Roman establishment when they should have been concentrating on gaining autonomy in the North. He sums his reasons up in his anti-Bossi pamphlet G. Miglio (1994) "Io, Bossi e la Lega - Diario Segreto dei Miei Quattro Anni sul Carroccio".

nations.”<sup>28</sup> There is substantial disagreement as to the future course of the EU as evidenced by the different positions of national governments in the negotiations surrounding the 1996 Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC). But the fact is that the European Union already demands a considerable portion of the traditional powers of a nation-state, especially in the legal and economic spheres and to change this context there would have to be a reversal of the incremental processes of the last forty years which seems a highly unlikely development.<sup>29</sup> The stand-off between the British government and Europe over the BSE crisis in British beef has illustrated the degree of intermeshing on both agricultural and trade matters with Britain’s farmers dependent on decisions in Brussels not London for any lifting of the world-wide export ban

Thus although there is much current disagreement as to the pace and nature of future European integration, it seems that at least a core group of nations will press ahead with further integration of currency and defence. Both the SNP and the Northern League are very keen for such developments to occur<sup>30</sup> and as such the distinctiveness in their visions begins to blur. An independent Scotland, with no opt-outs to the Treaty of European Union would have fiscal and social policy autonomy but would lose control over its monetary policy, currency and defence (a solution which is analogous to a devolved parliament in the UK). An autonomous North of Italy would have some fiscal and social policy freedom in an Italy which would have

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<sup>28</sup> J. Delors & Clisthène (1992) *“Our Europe - The Community and National Development”* Preface p.vii.

<sup>29</sup> This can be backed up by reference to the primacy of European law over national law through the subservience of member-states’ national judiciaries to the rule of the European Court of Justice. It is also supported by the widespread pro-European stance of businesses, large and small, even in the more sceptical member-states, evidenced by a MORI survey of business confidence which revealed only 12% of Scottish firms opposed unequivocally to the idea of a single European currency, quoted in [*The Scotsman*, 7/11/95] p.20.

<sup>30</sup> See SNP publication (1992b) *‘Scotland - A European Nation - The Case for Independent Scottish Membership of the European Community’* or (1993a) *‘Independence in Europe’* produced by SNP Research Department. For the League see (1994a) *‘Il Programma della Lega Nord’* published before the election of March 1994 or (1993) *‘Il Bossi - Pensiero 1979-1993’* pp.54-56 on United States of Europe.



lost to federal Brussels the powers previously reserved to its Roman centre. This begs the question of how different the aims of both movements are. Although their headline policy goals of outright nationalism and devolved federalism seemed to differ greatly, the reality of the different autonomies demanded by the SNP and the Northern League in a European Union context appear much more similar. When one delves below the surface and looks at the activists' views there is much crossover of view, such as the enduring support for home rule amongst many SNP supporters which data analysis will highlight<sup>31</sup> in later chapters. Likewise amongst SNP voters there exists a substantial minority who express devolution as their preferred constitutional option and a small minority who favour the status quo.<sup>32</sup>

One is thus confronted with the central question which this thesis aims to explore : the nature of autonomist sentiment in 1990s Europe with its supranational institutions and dynamics unprecedented in the history of nation-states. This chapter will seek to ask whether the differences between the SNP and the Northern League are more cosmetic than real; whether if both were to achieve their stated goals the result would in fact be more similar than different and thus whether especially in the

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<sup>31</sup> "...one thing probably with the SNP with me is I do wish that the parties in Scotland would work together more, I don't really like the kind of antagonism because for me I sort of see the common enemy as the Tories and you know I just want to fight that, so I don't really like the in-fighting with Labour really, probably because I'm quite left-wing really and I have got sympathies with Labour and their point of view...if we had had devolution things would have been quite different in Scotland.". A quote from an SNP activist which can be compared with the league activist's "I would like to see complete independence, I want to separate, I don't want any discussion of a nation with the rest of Italy, I just want to be in the North of Italy and I'd be very happy, these are my true feelings....I do not want anything to do with them in the sense of a unitary state, it's another part of the country." The picture being built up is one where it is more difficult to dismiss one as a simple nationalist movement and one as a simple regionalist grouping, as Chapter Six will aim to show.

<sup>32</sup> In the Scottish Election Survey of 1992, out of 188 SNP voters, 57% favoured independence, 39% devolution and 4% no change which doesn't represent a particularly large shift from the October 1974 Scottish Election Survey figures which saw 48% favouring independence, 42% devolution and 11% the status quo amongst a survey group of 225 SNP voters. Thus despite the shift from stand-alone independence to statehood within the European Union only a little over half of SNP voters share its headline goal. However it should be added that the same 1992 survey shows 20% of Labour voters preferring independence, so the picture is a confused one - see Brand et. al. (1994a) 'Will Scotland Come to the Aid of the Party?' in A. Heath et. al. "Labour's Last Chance?" p. 221 Table 12.4 .

context of the European Union the existing theories of nationalism and regionalism fail to explain current developments. Through close examination of the Scottish and Northern Italian examples, it is hoped that progress can be made toward understanding contemporary demands for autonomy from territories within existing states, amidst concurrent moves to supranational integration. The aim is to move toward definitions of nationalism, regionalism and autonomy which fit the developing reality of an integrated, supranational Europe.

## **2.2 The Traditional Theories**

These questions can only be properly addressed when one has a thorough grasp of the various existing theories of nationalism and the backbone of this chapter will be a discussion of these theories with the focus being on their relevance to the 1990s and beyond. From the outset it is important to be aware of the complexity involved - simplistic, hegemonic theories should be treated with suspicion for there is no obvious empirical example of a simplistic, hegemonic nation-state. The largest danger of viewing nationalism in this traditional hegemonic manner is the conclusion that all variants of the phenomenon are pushed into the same analytical category - linguistic, cultural, territorial or religious being four such paradigms. As expounded in the introduction Alberto Melucci posits that in its contemporary form nationalism contains at least three major elements : the historical-cultural, the political-instrumental and the psycho-social. His analysis, which seeks to understand contemporary nationalism more as a social movement than as an ideology, is a long distance from the works which have dominated academic curricula on nationalism - for instance those by Kedourie, Gellner and Hobsbawm<sup>33</sup>. Whilst all three of these works are valuable in understanding the emergence and ultimate ascendancy of the

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<sup>33</sup> E. Kedourie (1993) "Nationalism" E. Gellner (1993) op. cit. and E.J. Hobsbawm (1992) op. cit..

'nation-state' as societies moved from the agrarian to the industrial stage of history, all struggle to give a convincing account of the contemporary resurgence of the phenomenon. This failure stems from the tendency toward a monolithic interpretation of nationalism in each of the authors' explanations.

Elie Kedourie is unambiguous that nationalism is an ideology in the manner of liberalism or socialism, stemming from Enlightenment thinking on the freedom of the self then projected as self-determination onto the collectivity of a nation. For Ernest Gellner nationalism was the glue necessary to bind multiplying and urbanising populations to the nation-states which emerged during the birth-pangs of industrialisation and was achieved by the creation of 'national' languages through education and 'national' culture through the spread of print capitalism. For the Marxist Eric Hobsbawm in his early work on nationalism<sup>34</sup>, it represented a 'false consciousness' readily imposed on the masses by elites keen to obtain their loyalty and so subvert their 'real' class consciousness. All of the accounts contain much explanation for the emergence of nationalism in the early industrial age. Yet none of these interpretations possess adequate explanatory power for the modern world, because of their overly simple equation of nationalism with nation-state building, as James Kellas pointed out in a criticism specifically aimed at Gellner's theory but which is applicable to all :

"Nationalist behaviour in its contemporary form is hardly explained in this theory. It deals with the reasons why industrialising states adopted a national form in order to prosper, and the nationalism which was associated with that...Contemporary nationalisms have arisen in long-industrialised countries which Gellner might have called nation-states. Something new seems to have happened outside Gellner's theory"<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> In defence of Hobsbawm he has adopted a much more realistic acceptance of contemporary nationalism in his recent history of the current century E.J. Hobsbawm (1995) *"Age of Extremes - The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991"*.

<sup>35</sup> J. G. Kellas (1991) *"The Politics of Nationalism & Ethnicity"* pp.43-44.

The change from the pre-industrial to the industrial age cannot be simplistically equated with the change from the industrial to the post-industrial. In the former, nationalism emerged on the relatively clean slate of an atomised, agrarian societal ordering but in the latter case nationalism has been present for over two hundred years and so is intertwined with contemporary developments in societies which are now very complex daily interactions of millions of people. In short, many of today's autonomists are attempting to unravel the achievements of yesterday's nationalists. The SNP and the Northern League are reactions to the failures of the nation-building projects conducted along the lines of Gellner's theory. Hobsbawm in 'Age of Extremes' highlights one of the complicating factors as the dearth of available models, thus:

"As the transnational economy established its grip over the world, it undermined a major, and since 1945, virtually universal, institution : the territorial nation-state, since such a state could no longer control more than a diminishing part of its affairs...Paradoxically, but perhaps not surprisingly, this weakening of the nation-state went with a new fashion for cutting up the old territorial nation-states into what claimed to be smaller, new ones, mostly based on the demand of some group to ethnic-linguistic monopoly.. The development was paradoxical, since it was perfectly plain that the new mini-nation-states, suffered from precisely the same drawbacks as the older ones, only, being smaller, more so. It was less surprising than it seemed, simply because the only actual state model available in the late twentieth century, was that of the bounded territory with its own autonomous institutions - in short the nation-state model of the Age of Revolution."<sup>36</sup>

Contemporary European nationalism, however, encounters this paradox against the different backdrop of pan-European integration already outlined and the thesis will explore how much the context of the EU allows new types of small-scale nationalism to arise within such an interdependent scenario. Much of the confusion stems from the use of the same 'nationalist' label for a whole variety of different movements and sentiments. Nationalism is the generic term used to describe both the forging of the dominant states of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the movements to break away from the strictures of these states or their empires in the twentieth century. Yet the differences between these aspects of nationalism are, at least, as

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<sup>36</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm (1995) op. cit. pp.424-425.



large as their continuities, a distinction which has already been highlighted by commentators such as Nairn who used the term 'neo-nationalism' to try and capture the significant changes in the content of the term in its British application.<sup>37</sup>

The largest problem with the analyses cited is their refusal to move from the equation of nationalism with nation-state building and absolute control of all the institutions and levers of power. This is an outdated analysis when many of the new manifestations of nationalism stem precisely from the break-down of legitimacy which these traditional nation-states have undergone in the latter half of the twentieth century. Hobsbawm's point about the nation-state being the only available model is a key one here and to the extent that new institutions and forms of government are still sought, nationalism may still be applied. However it is the contention of this thesis that a large difference exists because these new institutions may not necessarily be sovereign. In the context of the EU, movements like those to be studied are rather attempts to make sense of the modern dilemmas which see the traditional nation-state attacked concurrently by supranational and sub-national forces.

### **2.3 Beyond the Constraints of 'Nationalism'**

Nationalism is then a problematic description of modern movements precisely because it carries with it so much historical baggage and so fails to capture the complexities and subtleties now present. Moreover, a definitive nationalism is never present in any individual but will rather ebb and flow over time, as one identity amongst many competing for primacy. Nor can national or regional identity be simplistically related to voting for a nationalist or regionalist party. Evidence for this is provided by the poll data on the dual identities of Scottish citizens which has revealed there is no simple equation between favouring independence and voting

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<sup>37</sup> T. Nairn (1977) "The Break-up of Britain Crisis and Neo-Nationalism".

SNP,<sup>38</sup> whilst in the Italian context there is an even less clear link between affinity to a specific region and acting politically upon this identity.<sup>39</sup> With such shifting identities Melucci's view of contemporary nationalism as a complex social movement rather than a monolithic political party or ideology seems to possess much more utility in explaining social reality. Difficulty remains in grasping the role that traditional nationalism has played in emptying itself of analytic value, as McCrone says:

"The irony is that nationalism is probably the grave-digger of the conventional nation-state with its commitment to 'a world of sovereign, self-reliant nation-states claiming the right to assert themselves and pursue their essential national interests by taking recourse to force' (Mommson). In its classical form nationalism is pursuing precisely those political structures which are rapidly falling into disuse. As such, nationalism is probably destined to consume its own offspring. In this sense, *these are post-nationalist times.*" (my italics)<sup>40</sup>

Here then is a potential solution to the redundancy of using nationalism as the generic term for political manifestations separated by centuries of nation-building and nation-fraying. 'Post'-nationalism seems to capture the spirit of the times for the autonomist, federalist and separatist movements that are opposed to centralised state control and in this sense are successors to, or 'post' the traditional nation-state, which has represented the epitome of traditional nationalism. Thus, in an era when the model of one nation/one state coincidence is the exception rather than the rule, 'post'-nationalism would seem to allow the theoretical capture of the disintegration in the overlap of nation, state and civil society. This term is not simply proffered as a neat conceptual way of hiving off present-day nationalisms from their historical antecedents, rather it is contended that these contemporary nationalisms are

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<sup>38</sup> J. Brand et. al. (1992) op. cit. - see the regression analysis cited on p.10 with comment that "Support for constitutional change, which had helped distinguish SNP voters from all other voters, failed to do so when Labour voters were compared with SNP voters." (p.8) - thus when SNP and Labour supporters are isolated in terms of their identity there is no statistically significant difference in the 1992 Scottish Election Survey.

<sup>39</sup> See I. Diamanti (1993) "La Lega - Geografia, Storia e Sociologia di un Nuovo Soggetto Politico" Chapter 6, pp.87-110.

<sup>40</sup> D. McCrone (1992) "Understanding Scotland - The Sociology of a Stateless Nation" p.219.

theoretically different from those which powered the building of the old nation-states, especially those present within a supranational context. They are best understood in terms of reactions to this traditional nationalism, so conceptual differentiation should help not hinder analysis. This thesis will argue that to a certain degree both the SNP and the Northern League are best understood in 'post'-nationalist terms.

## **2.4 The Effects of Globalisation**

That the traditional model of nationalism no longer fits the global reality has been argued by many recent commentators. Isaiah Berlin in his 1991 essay on the rise of nationalism - 'The Bent Twig' - uses a tree metaphor where the nation-state was for long the dominant trunk bending and sometimes breaking the branches and twigs of sub-national units, but now with the attack on the traditional nation-state the potential energy of such bent twigs is unleashed, giving rise to a different kind of nationalism:

"This kind of nationalism is, perhaps, as much a form of social or class resistance as of purely national self-assertion, creating a mood in which men prefer to be ordered about by members of their own faith or nation or class."<sup>41</sup>

Here one gets the idea of such nationalism being a form of seeking accountability more than a hegemonic ideology, but before this concept is used to move toward a plausible theory of post-nationalism, evidence must be provided for the contention that the nation-state of conventional nationalism is indeed under siege and that a concomitant to this is the rise of more localised autonomy movements. Taking a definition of modernity from Giddens that sees it as inherently globalising such that:

"Globalisation can...be defined as the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. This is a dialectical process because such local happenings may move in an obverse direction from the very distanced relations that shape them...The

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<sup>41</sup> I. Berlin (1991) "The Crooked Timber of Humanity" p.251.

development of globalised social relations serves to diminish some aspects of nationalist feelings linked to nation-states but may be causally involved with the intensifying of more localised national sentiments.”<sup>42</sup>

Vitality the processes of modernity which include changes in the structure of the international economy, the scope of technology (especially in transport and communication) and the end of the Cold War need not be seen as mono-causal. This complexity allows the superficially contradictory forces of tribalism and globalism to be seen as different reactions to the same phenomenon of modernity. The changes in the nature of capitalism which technological advance and market deregulation have brought changes to the relationship between citizens and the classically constructed nation-states, which have left the latter very much on the defensive as the rhetoric of Euro-sceptic Conservatives in the 1995 Conservative Party leadership election made clear.<sup>43</sup> The basic problem is that citizens hold governments responsible for economic developments outwith their control and so seek solutions which involve more local, devolved control, as Horsman & Marshall spell out:

“Citizens will tend to think more closely - again - about their own communities (variously defined) seeking local political reflections of their concerns, even as the economies in which they are consumers move ever closer toward global integration.”<sup>44</sup>

The processes of globalisation have affected the traditional nation-state in three main spheres - economic, military and cultural - and it is no coincidence that these are three of the areas most often highlighted in traditional theories of nation-building. Specifically the state has lost considerable economic autonomy through the growth of multinational conglomerates with their cross-border, international search for economies of scale and global optimisation. Concurrently the revolution in communications has made international capital transactions instantaneous and so

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<sup>42</sup> A. Giddens (1991) “The Consequences of Modernity” pp.64-65.

<sup>43</sup> The rhetoric of challenger John Redwood centred on rolling back the EU until it was a Customs Union and was carried on at the October 1995 Conservative Party conference by Michael Portillo in a speech which raised European bogeymen which Brussels has never even proposed - see ‘Bagehot’ column in [The Economist, 14th - 20th October 1995] p.46.

<sup>44</sup> M. Horsman & A. Marshall (1994) “After the Nation-State : Citizens, Tribalism & the New World Disorder” p.xv.



eroded much of the monetary autonomy once enjoyed and the days of national economic planning are now long gone (as evidenced by the international nature of the 1987 stock exchange crash or the collapse of the London-based Barings Bank due to excessive derivatives trading by one employee in Singapore). International markets determine commodity prices, interest rates and the availability of finance at the whim of speculators and world stock exchanges are largely liberalised allowing cross-border quotation. The era of the nation-state providing a dominant internal market and external protective shield has long gone.

In military terms the growth of two superpowers after the Second World War meant that all other states became dependent for their national security on international alliances. Security is now most often defined in collective rather than national terms, regardless of the possession of nuclear capabilities, since the discovery of the atom bomb paradoxically meant that the nation-state could no longer guarantee absolute safety. Although possession of a nuclear capability does still imbue much global bargaining power and is sought by many states, from France to Iraq, the likelihood of using such national power remains very limited.

The telecommunications revolution has seen the emergence of a mass, homogenised global culture, largely revolving around the USA. These changes have occurred within a context of burgeoning international institutions - the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) - and a larger role for international law sometimes constitutionally enshrined, such as the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Such huge changes have led David Beetham to comment that: "There is an increasingly serious question mark over the ability of the sovereign nation-state to

protect the economic welfare, the physical security and the cultural identity of its inhabitants.”<sup>45</sup>

Indeed the very idea of the sovereign nation-state is one which it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain, particularly for nations within the European Union substantial sovereignty has been given up to pan-European institutions.<sup>46</sup> As Hobsbawm sums up the ‘short twentieth century’:

“By the end of the century the nation-state was on the defensive against a world economy it could not control; against the institutions it had constructed to remedy his own international weakness, such as the EU; against its financial incapacity to maintain the services to its citizens so comfortably undertaken a few decades ago; against its real incapacity to maintain what, by its own criteria, was its major function : the maintenance of public law and order. The very fact that, during the era of its rise, the state had taken over and centralized so many functions, and set itself such ambitious standards of public order and control, made its inability to maintain them doubly painful.” <sup>47</sup>

Nowhere is this defensive clearer than in the field of European law where an unprecedented pooling of sovereignty has occurred under the provisions of the Treaty of Rome and later treaties which through the doctrines of direct effect and supremacy have for the first time in international history created “the ability to bypass the nation-state’s formal autonomy and exclusivity in both adopting policy and legislation as well as dealing directly with the citizen.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore the decision by the European Court in October 1995 to uphold a British individual’s complaint against the discrepancy of prescription charges between men and women and order immediate equalisation shows how far a national polity can be penetrated by the doctrine of direct effect, in an area which might appear to fall under the social policy opt-out negotiated as part of the Maastricht Treaty. Thus European law goes further than canon law and public international law had previously advanced in

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<sup>45</sup> D. Beetham (1984) ‘The Future of the Nation-State’ in G. McLennan et. al. “The Idea of the Modern State” p.219.

<sup>46</sup> This much was admitted by the Foreign Secretary, Home, at the time of Britain’s first application to the then EEC as quoted by Allan Massie in ‘The Scotsman’ [27/6/95] p.13.

<sup>47</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm (1995) op. cit. pp.576-577.

<sup>48</sup> J. Weiler (1981) ‘The Community System : The Dual Character of Supranationalism’ p.46.

having entrenched treaty rights over state law (with no provision for their reversal). Unlike the nineteenth century which saw the zenith of the doctrine of the unitary state, the late twentieth century legal solution to the onset of modernity has been to seek methods of dividing and sharing sovereignty, and as Neil MacCormick observes:

“..it is clear that absolute or unitary sovereignty in the internal sense is entirely absent from the legal and political setting of the EC. Neither politically or legally is any member state in possession of ultimate power over its own internal affairs...the states are no longer fully sovereign states externally, nor can any of their internal organs be considered to enjoy internal sovereignty under the law; nor have they unimpeded political sovereignty.”<sup>49</sup>

The most common definition of this post-Cold War world is a post-imperialist one - what this thesis will seek to explore is to what extent it can also be said to be a ‘post’-national one. Post-imperial implies that since the collapse of the physical and psychological Berlin Walls in 1989 the world has lacked an imperial overlord or overlords, who define interests in every crevice of the globe and will act to defend such interests (as previously were enshrined in the Truman and Brezhnev Doctrines). The main line of dissent against this view would be to cite the USA - the self-proclaimed ‘victor’ of the Cold War - as an imperial power. However such a line of argument is difficult to sustain for except in the remarkable and, probably unrepeatable, coalescing of circumstances in the Gulf War, the US has had no clearly defined military interests in the world's troublespots, most notably Bosnia and Somalia, as one would expect from a ‘great power’<sup>50</sup>. Though the US did try to police them it met with little success. The Asian-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) held in Seattle in 1994 was a clear signal of the USA's continued focus on economic over military security, a process began in the 1980s with the formation of the NAFTA bloc with Canada and Mexico. Clinton's presidency, it seems, marks a

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<sup>49</sup> N. MacCormick (1995a) ‘Sovereignty - Myth & Reality’ pp.9-10.

<sup>50</sup> P. Kennedy (1987) in his “The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers” sees the contemporary USA as suffering from the classic guns versus butter dichotomy which assuages all ‘great powers’ as their military overstretch leads to domestic economic problems.

USA which is turning inwards rather than imperial, particularly after the Republican victories of November 1994 giving control of both houses to self-proclaimed isolationist majorities, though Clintonites would claim that peace is now sought by negotiation rather than force. This is not to claim that the USA is not the most dominant country in the 1990s and probably will be into the next century. However in stark contrast to its messianic approach to foreign affairs during the Cold War in which the Monroe Doctrine was applied on a global level, the USA has now turned much more toward its own continent and its Pacific Rim, a recognition of a world economy which is becoming increasingly dependent on trade blocs over individual nations, as Kennedy sums up in his analysis of the USA as a contemporary 'great power':

"The tests before the United States as it heads toward the twenty-first century are certainly daunting, perhaps especially in the economic sphere; but the nation's resources remain considerable, *if* they can be properly organised, and *if* there is a judicious recognition of both the limitations and the opportunities of American power."<sup>51</sup>

With several competing poles of economic and military power, combined with the USA's more isolationist stance, the contemporary global polity can be accurately labelled post-imperial, although the USA does represent an unequal competitor in many particular sectors.

David Held has summed up the implications of this section's discussion for the sovereignty of the nation-state with the conclusion that it : "...has to be conceived today as already divided among a number of agencies - national, international and transnational - and limited by the very nature of this plurality."<sup>52</sup> The traditional nation-state then is proving ill-adapted to a globalised world in the late twentieth century and with its limits being graphically displayed many are, as has been seen, imploding, adding sub-national strain to Held's plurality of agencies. However to talk of nationalism filling this vacuum, without acknowledging the fundamental change

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. pp.534-535.

<sup>52</sup> D. Held (1988) 'Farewell to the Nation-State' p.16.



in its content, creates a very misleading scenario, which Zygmunt Bauman ironically highlights in his discussion of a possible global order:

"The genuine chances of a 'global culture' depends not so much on the cultural offer but by the unchanged needs of identity-building. These needs, if anything, tend to be more acute still...in the wake of the ever more evident bankruptcy of nation states in their past role of producers and suppliers of ultimate identity." <sup>53</sup>

It is in the furnishing of such identity needs that contemporary autonomist parties can be seen to be part of the same processes as those which have borne globalisation.

## **2.5 Towards 'Post'-Nationalism**

What though of the other concept referred to above alongside globalisation, namely 'post'-nationalism? It is a concept borne out of the globalisation of the international economy and, to an extent, the international polity described. The motors of these movements have been the pace of twentieth century technological change and the advent of an international community which possesses active transnational institutions, rather than simply resting on a precarious balance of power system.

By the former is meant the huge changes in national economies which have been augmented by the advent of the computer and telecommunications revolutions of the last two decades, changes captured well by Robert Reich:

"We are living through a transformation that will rearrange the politics and economics of the coming century. There will be no *national* products or technologies, no national corporations, no national industries. There will no longer be national economies, at least as we have come to understand that concept. All that will remain rooted within national borders are the people who comprise a nation. Each nation's primary assets will be its citizens' skills and insights. Each nation's primary political task will be to cope with the centrifugal forces of the global economy which tear at the ties binding citizens together...As borders become ever more meaningless in economic terms, those citizens best positioned to thrive in the world market are tempted to slip the bonds of national allegiance."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Z. Bauman (1992a) 'Soil, Blood and Identity' p.692.

<sup>54</sup> R. B. Reich (1991) "The Work of Nations - Preparing Ourselves For 21st Century Capitalism" p.3.

By the latter is understood the growth of both governmental and non-governmental organisations since the Second World War<sup>55</sup>. In contrast to any previous epoch we live in one in which most economic flows are international and in which some governance has been internationalised. Indeed such is the flow of international currencies across borders that many domestic governmental choices are now determined by the markets.<sup>56</sup> Since the demise of the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system in the 1970s and the liberalisation of financial markets through the 1980s, international flows of capital have soared. The defence of a weak currency against which speculation is occurring requires the use of interest rates - traditionally an instrument of domestic economic management. In the European Union the constraints are even more explicit through the convergence criteria for monetary union laid down in the Maastricht Treaty on European Union.<sup>57</sup> From these developments in the international economy and polity the theories of internationalism, supranationalism and 'post'-nationalism have emerged focusing on the increasing inability of traditional nation-states to deal with the demands of populations facing economic and political uncertainty as a direct consequence of the changes taking place. Indeed nation-states find themselves paradoxically with less and less power to begin to answer some of the new demands being made on them by international and supranational developments. It is in this sense we can be said to be moving toward a 'post'-national world.

However, it is a term which one must use very warily for although the classical nation-state may be in economic and administrative decline, there has been a parallel

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<sup>55</sup> "The number of *intergovernmental* international organisations grew from 123 in 1951 through 280 in 1972 to 365 in 1984; the number of international *non-governmental* organisations from 832 through 2,173 in 1972, more than doubling to 4,165 in the next twelve years. Probably the only functioning 'national economy' of the late twentieth century is the Japanese." Hobsbawm (1992) op.cit. p.181.

<sup>56</sup> The value of financial transactions was 25 times higher than that of real trade in the EC in the mid-1980s - see J. Delors (1992) op.cit. pp.12-13.

<sup>57</sup> See Commission of the European Communities (1992) op. cit. p.41 Article 109j.

increase in the importance of nationalism in political identity terms. Coinciding with the emergence of what Inglehart has termed 'post-industrial' politics<sup>58</sup> in the 1970s one sees the emergence of significant autonomy parties in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland, a rise highlighted thus by David McCrone:

"...ethnicity did not wither but revived as a source of identity to meet new emergent needs...The resurgence of local and ethnic nationalisms came to be seen not as in direct contradiction to increasing globalisation of economic, political and cultural power, but as part of the process itself."<sup>59</sup>

It is this relationship, which on the surface appears paradoxical, which lies at the heart of this study. In seeking to understand why the response to the crisis of the nation-state has been to seek smaller nation-states or, at least, autonomous regional units, one must ask whether the new variants are substantially different to what exists. The answer to this question will stem from analysis of the real world experiences of Scotland and Northern Italy. Thus the study does not ignore the reality of modern autonomy movements simply to fit in with neat theories about economic globalisation. To gain a true understanding of the complex subject of 'post'-nationalism one must look at what is happening within existing European nation-states. There will be no bland assertion that the nation-state is dead; it is not and it remains the starting point of this research as the central unit in the current international order, indeed some commentators such as Alan Milward have argued that the European Community has allowed the survival of the European nation-state.<sup>60</sup> Michael Mann goes further than this to argue that to become preoccupied with a corner of Europe misses the bulk of what is happening to nation-states in the global picture. Mann argues that whilst nation-states may be losing some of their traditional military and economic powers, they are gaining new powers of regulation in both the private sphere (such as the family) and the public realm (as with the

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<sup>58</sup> R. Inglehart (1977) "The Silent Revolution - Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics".

<sup>59</sup> D.McCrone (1992) op.cit. p.10.

<sup>60</sup> See A. S. Milward (1993) "The Frontier of National Sovereignty - History & Theory 1945-1992".

environment).<sup>61</sup> Any new theories or ideas have their reference point in the national unit, if only because of the dearth of models available as Hobsbawm has pointed out, and Ignatieff warns of the dangers of simply rejecting the nation-state thus: "If patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel...so post-nationalism and its accompanying disdain for the nationalist emotions of others, may be the last refuge of the cosmopolitan."<sup>62</sup> A key question, however, is to what extent the definition of this national unit is shifting and to what extent any shifts negate traditional definitions of nationalism and nation-statehood.

Moving toward a 'post'-national theory will involve much analysis of just how far the nation-state can be said to have decayed and any new theory will still contain many elements of the old. It is not an either/or situation in which a clear dichotomy exists between the old and the new, rather a process in which the abilities of the nation-state and the meaning of sovereignty have changed. Theories should also reflect these changes. Underlying the analysis of 'post'-nationalism must be the question of whether the new ethnicities are just another strand of protest politics or a manifestation of a far more fundamental and permanent political identity, namely a new content for nationalism. Are they merely short-term rhetorical devices fitted to contemporary political constraints, or are they more long-term, novel forms of identity embracing the regional, national and the supranational concurrently?

The crux of the 'post'-nationalist case lies in the writings of the likes of Melucci and Bauman mentioned above - that human beings still possess the same needs for identity and over two hundred years of historical baggage has placed the search for this identity in national terms, despite the global pleas of a Bauman or a Vaclav Havel. Thus 'post'-nationalism will share many features with traditional nationalism,

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<sup>61</sup> M. Mann (1993) 'Nation-States in Europe and Other Continents : Diversifying, Developing, Not Dying'.

<sup>62</sup> M.Ignatieff (1993a) op. cit. p.11.



especially in the conduits by which it bestows identity, but there are crucial differences in the environment in which it emerges as the previous discussion has made clear and these condition the contents of the concept. 'Post'-nationalism is an even more complex phenomenon than nationalism since it involves a response to the latter and a concurrent reaction to the complicated needs of complex industrial societies. As discussed earlier the dominant model available for all breakaway movements is the traditional nationalist model, but this thesis will contend that both the external and internal parameters of this model have shifted, and whether or not these are explicitly recognised through the use of a new term, such as 'post'-nationalism, it is important that these changes in context and content are elucidated.

Put simply, whilst the traditional role of the nation-state has been attacked on the economic, military, cultural and geo-political level, these attacks have been wounding rather than fatal. Moreover there still seems to be a role for national identity in terms of furnishing belonging, as suggested by the numbers choosing to identify themselves as Scottish over British, Catalan over Spanish, Quebecois over Canadian and so on.<sup>63</sup> Such moves represent a search for roots but they do not represent an attempt to build a hegemonic nation-state. What emerges, when and if these movements are successful will be very different and far more constrained than the traditional nineteenth century nation-state but, somewhat paradoxically, will still be referred to as a 'nation', because this is the term that history and habit have inscribed in the political lexicon. If the Bosnian crisis or Nigeria's flouting of the Commonwealth and the wider international community over the Ogoniland situation have shown anything it is that nation-states are still and will remain the unit of geo-political currency. No-one is about to start talking of 'post'-nations but the argument

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<sup>63</sup> Evidence of the first two can be sourced in Luis Moreno's comparative work between Scotland and Catalonia - L. Moreno (1988) 'Scotland and Catalonia : The Path to Home Rule' pp.166-181 ; whilst for the third identity difference asserted here one need look no further than the October 1995 referendum on Quebec's future within the Canadian federation which left opinion in the province split right down the middle.

which will be made by this thesis is that many of the nations which populate the globe in the next century will be fundamentally altered from their historical predecessors; they will share the same terminology, but differ greatly in their internal form and external powers. The role of the state in sustaining nationalism, which became crucial as its role and scope grew in early and mid twentieth century is now on the retreat and in the absence of international political institutions' ability<sup>64</sup> to carry out a similar role many areas are witnessing a political inward turn, concurrent to an economic outward turn. For instance Keating argues that the NAFTA context for Quebec grants it a similar backdrop to the autonomist movements in regions of the EU, commenting that "...as Quebec has become economically and socially more like the rest of Canada its identity has strengthened."<sup>65</sup>

The tentative use of the concept of 'post'-nationalism in this thesis is intended not to add to the intellectual confusion which often surrounds studies of nationalism, but rather to signpost the shift in content which it will argue has occurred and to begin therefore to unpick the wreckage of theories which have tended to homogenise all nationalisms at any epoch and in any place under one theory. An attempt will be made to contrast the situation of a specific form of nationalism, that of late twentieth century Western Europe in nation-states with considerable supranational commitments and with the dominant theories of nationalism which have centred around traditional nation-state building.

It is the fusion of the structural changes from above and the identity needs from below which this thesis seeks to deconstruct and so understand better the dominant

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<sup>64</sup> After investigating evidence for the development of a European political identity Ernst Haas concludes that "None of the data at our disposal can clearly tell us whether a European identity is replacing the nation-state as the focus of individual loyalty..there seems to be a weakened sense of nationhood, but it has not been translated into a strengthened sense of Europeaness." E.Haas (1990) 'The Limits of Liberal Nationalism in Western Europe' in B.Crawford & P. Schulze (ed.) *"The New Europe Asserts Itself"* p.343.

<sup>65</sup> M. Keating (1995) 'Canada & Quebec : Two Nationalisms in the Global Age' p.20.

forms of future European politics. Before outlining how the task of constructing a theory of 'post'-nationalism and belonging will be attempted, it is useful to summarise what is understood by a 'modern complex society' .

## **2.6 Defining Modern Complexity**

The term 'modern complexity' is used by Alberto Melucci in his book "Nomads of the Present" in which he seeks to rethink the conventional interpretation of social movements as metaphysical actors which views collective action as a unified empirical entity. Instead Melucci looks at the new forms which such collective action has taken over the last few decades, citing civil rights, feminist, peace, ecology and nationalist movements and highlighting the novel forms of support and structure which many of these movements have. Melucci attacks the structural, resource mobilisation and political exchange theories of social movements, which whilst acknowledging changes, remain too holistic in their approach. For him such movements are fragile, heterogeneous and shifting social constructions, which cannot be explained in sweeping generalisations. He is concerned by the lack of analysis on how collective action actually takes place - a product of over-concentration on structural or ideological analysis: "But neither tells us anything about how people come together and construct something called a movement."<sup>66</sup>

The collective action of modern societies is not comparable with historical movements which were more clearly based on one factor such as religion or class. Indeed Melucci contends that people may be in the same modern social movement for different reasons and that this plurality of levels stems from the complexity of modern societies. This complexity is a product of the growth of the size of the state from the 'laissez-faire' elites of the eighteenth century to the monolithic, all-

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<sup>66</sup> A. Melucci (1989) op. cit. p.198.

controlling bureaucracies of modern nation-states. It is in resistance to this modern-state building that Melucci centres his analysis of social movements which, therefore, cannot be treated as independent of the construct of modernity. Thus these movements are a part of the global information age, primarily acting as signs of individual concerns, which then organise collectively and are conscious of their relation to the global picture, through the linking of campaigns across borders (as with Greenpeace) or through the aspiration of emulating a different model (such as post-materialism).

Why though do individuals who now have unparalleled opportunities for material comfort (travel, leisure, communications) still seek 'membership' of such movements? Here Melucci turns to the universal human need for identity - the desire to relate and belong with other individuals in some sort of community, a desire which for Smith will always have a core ethnic base:

“Apart...from the question of attitudes to the masses and their inclusion in the community, it is clear that modern nations and nationalism have only extended and deepened the meanings and scope of older ethnic concepts and structures. Nationalism has certainly universalized these structures and ideas, but modern ‘civic’ nations have not in practice really transcended ethnicity or ethnic sentiments”<sup>67</sup>.

In the agrarian age this need for ‘membership’ was less problematic to fulfil with populations tending to be born and to die in specific locales with widespread migration not the norm and where the community was often fortified by specific local dialects. The age of industrialisation saw some of these norms challenged through extensive urbanisation and the establishment of the bureaucratic language as the national tongue. However traditional nationalism provided a powerful mass medium for the required, new larger-scale identities which were buoyed by the increasing wealth of these industrial societies.

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<sup>67</sup> A. D. Smith (1988) *“The Ethnic Origins of Nations”* p.216.



The present age differs from these previous epochs as both post-material and post-industrial. The former implies that the general population is now materially sated for the first time in history and the latter, that certainly for the countries of Western Europe and North America, the process of industrialism has now passed its zenith. Indeed many have embarked on an era of deindustrialisation with an ongoing transfer from secondary to tertiary economic sectors. Concurrent to these developments global migration has increased greatly, and the multi-ethnic societies which such migration has fostered have been supplemented by the post-war explosion of mass tourism and entrenched by the recent rise of mass media. For Melucci:

"The pace of social change, the plurality of memberships, and the abundance of possibilities and messages thrust upon the individual all serve to weaken the traditional points of reference - church, party, race, class - on which identity is based. A 'homelessness' of personal identity is created, such that the individual must build and rebuild constantly his or her 'home' in the face of changing situations and events." <sup>68</sup>

We can begin to structure a theory of 'post'-nationalism around these ideas. The autonomist movements currently visible within many traditional nation-states are one of the new channels through which individual identity can find a 'home'. They share this aspect with traditional nationalism but their emergence has been caused by the bankruptcy of the very nation-states which this nationalism constructed. In this sense they both continue and break with historical nationalism. It is this dualism which threatens to create analytic confusion. Whilst the identities proffered will have roots in the past, they also represent a break from this past and cannot therefore be seen in the manner of a holistic schism in modern societies. Therefore they are more complex than Anthony Smith's ethnocentric approach would imply such that "nations and ethnic communities are the natural units of history."<sup>69</sup> Rather the movements are complex, meaning different things to different people and playing at least the three roles outlined in the quote from Melucci in the Introduction : the historical-cultural need which furnishes roots and so provides a path to identity; the

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<sup>68</sup> A. Melucci (1989) op. cit. p.109.

<sup>69</sup> A. D. Smith (1988) op. cit. p. 12.



instrumental-political which sees these movements as moving against some of the structural contradictions of complex societies; and the psycho-social which means that they can provide individuals with that vital sense of belonging to something outwith mere consumerism. 'Post'-nationalism is not a monolithic force and it can only be understood by looking at its complexity and different aspects.

## **2.7 Constrained Imaginings**

A further useful theoretical tool is found in Benedict Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community'. While analysing the emergence of the traditional nation-states, Anderson provides an explanation which is far more enduring and malleable than other works already mentioned. His starting point is to see nations as 'cultural artefacts' which arouse very deep attachments, but they can and do change over time. Such malleability is central to Anderson's schema, thus: "...once created, they became 'modular', capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains,"<sup>70</sup>

This then stands in stark contrast to Kedourie's ideological view of nationalism as 'a *doctrine* invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century'<sup>71</sup> or Gellner's claim that "nationalism is primarily a political *principle*, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent"<sup>72</sup>. For Anderson these explanations are too 'doctrine' or 'principle' laden and they lack the fluidity over time which his more complex cultural definition allows, dependent on context as Kellas makes clear:

"The context in which nationalism flourishes is determined by a complex interaction of political, economic and cultural developments in history. While the ideology of nationalism has spread throughout the world, the differing contexts of time and place have given nationalism and ethnicity

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<sup>70</sup> B. Anderson (1983) op. cit. p.14.

<sup>71</sup> E. Kedourie (1993) op. cit. p.1.

<sup>72</sup> E. Gellner (1983) op. cit. p.1.

differing political forms.”<sup>73</sup>

The theories discussed explain nationalism as a once-and-for-all process which becomes impermeable, whereas Anderson's definition of the nation more closely approximates to Ernest Renan's famous 'daily plebiscite'<sup>74</sup>, namely that the nation is: “..an imagined political community - and imagined both as inherently limited and sovereign.”<sup>75</sup>

There are four elements within this definition worth highlighting. The nation is 'imagined' because even in the smallest nation one will never know most of the other members and this term is chosen to contrast specifically with Gellner's 'invention', which explains perhaps the 'above' intellectual elite level but says little of those 'below' who are also part of the community which had to be imagined as face-to-face contact was impossible. It is 'limited' since even the largest nation has finite, if elastic boundaries. It is 'sovereign' since each nation seeks its freedom in the sovereign state - a seat at the European table or a flag in the UN General Assembly being the ultimate symbol. Finally the nation is a 'community' because regardless of actual inequality, it is imagined as a deep, horizontal comradeship, a fraternity which sees its members willingly die for its preservation.

In 'post'-nationalist terms, these features retain their salience but with different emphases and different building-blocks. The nation is most definitely still 'imagined' and often exists only as a possibility. But it is not 'imaginary', rather it is a potential realm, to which those disaffected with their traditional nation-states aspire. It is, as it were, a promised land whose limits may be defined civically, ethnically or territorially depending on how citizenship is conceived. These new 'nations' still seek

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<sup>73</sup> J. G. Kellas (1991) op. cit. p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> E. Renan (1990) 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?' La Sorbonne, Paris, 1882 quoted in H. Bhabha (ed) "Nations and Narrative" p.19 "A nation's existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite."

<sup>75</sup> B. Anderson (1983) op. cit. p.15.

sovereignty in the legalistic sense but recognise that it would be a greatly constrained sovereignty and whilst they would still have international boundaries these demarcations are less important than accountability and democratic control, certainly in the European context, to the nation-seekers. Finally the horizontal bonds offered by the 'imagined community' are very important in terms of fulfilling the identity needs of many individuals increasingly stripped of their traditional bonds.

The nations which thus emerge from 'post'-nationalism will still be 'imagined communities' but their 'daily plebiscite' will be conducted on different issues. This change of emphasis reflects their genesis as products of the previous nationalist project. Their external environment is more complex and they themselves refract more diverse demands from below, hence the need to view these modern manifestations more as social movements than ideological monoliths. 'Post'-nationalism, much more than its predecessor, deals with the realpolitik of 'low' not 'high' concerns and its primary cause is the lack of accountability present in the nation-states created by the first phase of nationalism, captured thus by McCrone:

"The broad and diffuse, the 'non-political', appeal of nationalism seems to make it a movement of the twenty-first rather than the nineteenth century. Its commitment to the post-materialist values of autonomy, authenticity and accountability place 'post-nationalism' firmly in the future not the past."<sup>76</sup>

## **2.8 The Civic/Ethnic Dichotomy**

One of the fundamental distinctions most often drawn in the literature on nationalism is that between 'ethnic' nationalism and 'civic' nationalism.<sup>77</sup> The terms used to describe this dichotomy vary but for many commentators it has formed the fundamental building block in their analysis of nationalism. Amongst the first was Hans Kohn who saw the difference in terms of Western and Eastern nationalism:

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<sup>76</sup> D. McCrone (1992) op. cit. p.221.

<sup>77</sup> See J.Hall (1993) 'Nationalisms : Classified & Explained' pp.1-28.



“While the formation of national characters has gone on through many centuries, the crystallization has taken place in the age of nationalism. In the Western world, ...the rise of nationalism was a predominantly political occurrence; it was preceded by the formation of the future national state...Outside the Western world, in Central and Eastern Europe and in Asia, nationalism arose not only later, but also generally at a more backward stage of social and political development; the frontiers of an existing state and of a rising nationality rarely coincided; nationalism, there, grew in protest against and in conflict with the existing state pattern - not primarily to transform it into a people's state. but to redraw the political boundaries in conformity with ethnographic demands.”<sup>78</sup>

This split was taken up by John Plamenatz in his ‘Two types of nationalism’<sup>79</sup> and he sees Eastern nationalism as essentially a reaction to the colonisation and imperialism of the Western nations and as such it is both imitative and competitive. However such a stark dichotomy between east and west becomes more difficult to sustain as many established nation-states have come under threat themselves and as imperialism has withered as a world system. The idea of fundamental differences has also been portrayed, however, as stemming from the different demands which nationalists make, with the key distinction being between the civil and the ethnic axes. Thus Clifford Geertz differentiates between civil (or civic) and primordial (or ethnic) stimuli, such that : “Civil discontent finds its natural outlet in the seizing, legally or illegally, of the state apparatus. Primordial discontent strives more deeply and is satisfied less easily.”<sup>80</sup> This civic and ethnic divergence is also employed by Michael Ignatieff to explain the differences he encountered whilst journeying in six different nationalist areas.<sup>81</sup>

This dichotomy differentiates who is given access to the ‘imagined community’. In the case of the civic variant, the nation encompasses all those who regardless of race, creed, gender, language or ethnicity give consent to the imagined nation's laws and

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<sup>78</sup> H. Kohn (1945) ‘The Idea of Nationalism’ in J. Hutchison & A. D. Smith (ed.) (1994) “Nationalism” pp.163-164.

<sup>79</sup> J. Plamenatz (1976) ‘Two Types of Nationalism’ in E. Kamenka (ed.) “The Nature & Evolution of an Idea” pp.23-36.

<sup>80</sup> C. Geertz (1963) ‘The Integrative Revolution : Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States’ in J. Hutchison & A. D. Smith (1994) op. cit. p. 32.

<sup>81</sup> M. Ignatieff (1993a) op. cit. pp.3-6.

norms. It is civic since it creates a community of equals and democratic since sovereignty is vested in all the people who undertake the Hobbesian social contract. In contrast ethnic nationalism says that it is the people / nation (from the German word 'volk') who create the state and as such unity comes not from equal rights but from pre-existing ethnic characteristics such as language, religion, customs and traditions. However the contention that these two are distinct forms of nationalism needlessly mirrors the restrictive approach of the theorists already mentioned. It is more useful to view civic and ethnic strands of nationalist or regionalist feeling as differential aspects of a single phenomenon, rather than fundamental distinctions. Aspects of both strands are present in many contemporary autonomy movements and there can be conflict between the two - the dilemma which Settler Watch poses for the SNP and the split between the populist Bossi and his ethnicist, intellectual godfather, Gianfranco Miglio, being the most salient examples in the current context.

In terms of the current project, civic nationalism has the greater relevance, for no west European society in the late twentieth century is mono-ethnic. However the realities of intermarriage and immigration have not stopped the attempt to create nations based on exclusionary ethnicity with the killing of boyhood neighbours because they happen to be of a different ethnic group, or to occupy the wrong strips of land. The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda have shown that ethnicity can still possess a dominant, destructive character in the appropriate circumstances. Nor can Western Europe rest back on contented civic laurels, for the definition of citizenship enshrined in the German constitution is based not on a civic conception of citizenship but on German ethnicity. France's moves toward zero immigration display the rise of an ethnic aspect in the French definition of national identity, mirrored in British and Italian government moves to tighten their immigration laws in 1995. That such immigration issues are crucial to definitions of nationhood is demonstrated by Rogers Brubaker in his comparative study of French

and German attitudes to citizenship, concluding that above and below coalesce in the nation-state primarily through citizenry which satisfies the need for belonging : “The nation-state is not only, or primarily, an ethnodemographic phenomenon, or a set of institutional arrangements. It is also, crucially, a way of thinking about and appraising political and social membership.”<sup>82</sup>

This study will explore the ethnic aspects present in both Scottish and Northern Italian self-conceptions, both of which manifest in ‘anti-Southerner’ sentiments. Civic nationalism may be the ideal where individuals can reconcile their right to shape their own lives with their need to belong to a community in the late twentieth century world but the ethnic aspect persists and continues to lurk in the post-Cold War international polity and may in fact be mobilised by international developments. The type of sentiment based on ‘soil, blood and identity’ to use Bauman’s phrase is never far away on the fringes of even the most civic-minded nationalist or regionalist groups. The thesis also seeks to explore how far the sense of belonging formerly granted by the traditional nation-states may have broken down, and to what extent these have been based on civic or ethnic stimuli, for as Brubaker, whilst adding the rider that it may take years to occur, claims :

“..national citizenship may be eroded by the development of forms of supranational and sub-national citizenship. In the post-national Europe of the future, the decisive instances of belonging, the decisive sites of citizenship, might be Europe as a whole on the one hand and individual regions and municipalities on the other.”<sup>83</sup>

## **2.9 Nation versus Region**

One final conceptual area must be examined before the thesis turns to an examination of the chosen parties. It is the question of different terminologies. How close are the concepts of nationalism and regionalism? This question inspires much

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<sup>82</sup> R. Brubaker (1992) “Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany” p. 189.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p.187.

controversy for plainly there is a difference in demanding national independence and promoting regional rights, although Hugh Seton-Watson famously bridged the divide by describing regionalism as 'unsatisfied nationalism'<sup>84</sup>, in other words yet to create a nation-state for the region in question. Indeed the SNP draws substantially on the complaint that Scotland the nation has been treated just as any British region since the Act of Union in 1707, though the recent historical evidence points to a very differentiated treatment under the single Westminster parliament.<sup>85</sup> The Northern League, from January 1992, sought the creation of three macro-regions of the North, Centre and South which would be imbued with all bar the powers of defence, policing, foreign policy and money-issue which would be left in Roman hands until transferred to Brussels and Frankfurt.<sup>86</sup> However as mentioned earlier the League has in 1995 moved back toward a more militant secessionist stance as its frustration with the lack of change achievable in Rome has grown. Such policy shifts, taken together with the SNP's flirtation with devolution as a stepping stone which could last for fifty years according to one of the party's MPs Margaret Ewing in her speech to the 1995 SNP party conference, serves to further blur the boundaries between the goals of the two parties. Superficially it may seem that to talk of comparisons between the two movements is mistaken since the former wants complete independence from its unitary state whereas the latter has in the main demanded only substantial devolution. However this study will seek to show that there are substantial grounds for comparison between the SNP and the Northern League, or in other words, prove that any differences between the two are more rhetorical than real.

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<sup>84</sup> H. Seton-Watson (1971) 'Unsatisfied Nationalism' pp.3-14.

<sup>85</sup> L. Paterson argues that Scotland was 'de facto' as autonomous as many independent European nations through the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century - see L. Paterson (1994) "The Autonomy of Modern Scotland".

<sup>86</sup> Lega Nord (1994a) op. cit.



The basis for comparison does not stem from the rhetorical stance of the parties. What they desire are *different* outcomes in the political crisis facing their respective states. However the argument developed thus far suggests that the reality of these two cosmetically different solutions would not be greatly different and indeed theorists such as Donald Horowitz have argued that there is much blurring of borders between the two concepts, thus:

“The often tactical nature of demands, their elasticity, even fickleness, the willingness of independence movements to settle for much less than statehood, and the occasional interest of secessionists in capturing the whole state if that proves possible - all of these argue for an inclusive conception of separatism and secession, terms I shall therefore use interchangeably. Such a conception should embrace movements seeking a separate region within an existing state, as well as those seeking a separate and independent state.”<sup>87</sup>

This lack of qualitative difference between nation and region is especially true in the context of a widening and deepening European Union. Both the SNP and the Northern League campaign vigorously in favour of the European Union, for it is seen as the ideal conduit through which to bypass their respective national-states. The goal for both is a Europe drawing on the concept of subsidiarity to proclaim that government should be conducted at that level which gives the best efficiency and accountability to those governed.<sup>88</sup> Under subsidiarity the division between region and nation could become institutionally blurred with possible, future legislative areas including both nations (such as Luxembourg, Denmark and for those favouring complete independence, Scotland) and regions (Northern Italy, Bavaria and for devolutionists, Scotland). The distinction between the two matters little for the envisioned federal European future, although much of the institutional design of that future has still to be decided and will form the fulcrum of debate over the next

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<sup>87</sup> D. Horowitz (1985) 'Ethnic Groups in Conflict' in J. Hutchison & A. D. Smith (1994) op. cit. p.263.

<sup>88</sup> See SNP pamphlet (1993a) op. cit. p.12 "Subsidiarity will generate decision-making at the Scottish level only when Scotland achieves independent Member State status within the Community" and Lega Nord (1993) op. cit. p.56 where Bossi calls for "the growth of federal institutions based on the principle of subsidiarity."

decade - no state will go down without a rearguard action. Moreover, both parties are attempting to mobilise support for their programmes by the same method, namely by highlighting the importance of a distinct community of interests through a distinct identity as a means of achieving better government and more prosperity. Whether this identity is defined in national or regional terms matters little to the actual mobilisation process, as Delors spells out:

“A look ahead enables us, in fact, to define, for the future three great centres of economic and social dynamism : the Community, the Nation and the Region. On the balance between these three centres of decision will depend the vitality of the European whole.”<sup>89</sup>

## **2.10 ‘National’ Contexts**

At this stage it is worth considering briefly the types of identity and conceptions found in the differing Italian and British political contexts, an analysis which will be substantially expanded in Chapter Three. In the United Kingdom since the 1970s the SNP has faced competition from a devolutionist Labour Party, which now in the 1990s seems more committed at the British, national level than at any previous stage to a substantial devolving of power from the Westminster centre (perfectly fitting Nairn’s ‘neo-nationalist’ mantle discussed earlier). Moreover the data of opinion polls and election surveys on identity and voting behaviour shows that a substantial number of those who declare their nationality Scottish only or Scottish more than British vote for non-SNP parties, predominantly the Labour Party, as is made very clear in Table 2.1 overleaf calculated from information from the Scottish Election Survey of 1992:

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<sup>89</sup> J. Delors (1992) op. cit. p.155.

**Table 2.1 National Identity and Vote 1992<sup>90</sup>**

	Conservative %	Labour %	Liberal Democrat %	SNP %
Scottish not British	9	19	8	36
More Scottish than British	25	46	48	44
Equally Scottish and British	51	32	36	18
British more than/ not Scottish	15	3	8	2
N	209	296	87	192

There is no clear-cut correlation between the SNP and national identity and nor can that party be seen as co-terminous with national identity, with a surprising percentage of Conservative supporters feeling at least as Scottish as British, or more so. Instead the relationship is far more subtle and complex, involving different levels from the familial to the international. T.C. Smout tries to conceptualize these as a set of concentric circles, across which any individual's identity cuts with the emphases dependent on gender, class, occupation, race, language, religion and leisure. Whilst the model may be attacked since it assumes an inherent complementarity of rings, it serves a useful purpose in illustrating the current point, namely that the Scottish identity is a complex one, summed up thus:

“..Scottish identity is embedded in a group of other identities between the family and the supranational, which include a British identity that doesn't conflict but rather co-exists with the Scottish identity; and...many other identities intersect with the territorially-based concentric loyalties, some of which have little effect on them, others of which have a substantial effect, usually along the lines of emphasising that loyalty to ring four is different from loyalty to ring five.”<sup>91</sup>

Ring four here represents the Scottish nation and ring five the British state. The overlap between these two helps to explain much of the complexity of the Scottish identity, and the lack of simplistic equation between the SNP and nationalism. The

<sup>90</sup> This table is recalculated from Table 12.3 which gives Identity by Vote from J. Brand et.al. op. cit. (1994a) p.220 - expressing the table this way round still makes the point about the complexity of the relationship between national identity and voting without allowing the size of the Labour vote to skew the figures.

<sup>91</sup> T.C.Smout (1994) 'Perspectives on the Scottish Identity' p.107.

SNP seeks to re-marry rings four and five, but many Scots would be happy with a solution which grants Scotland autonomous regional powers within the supranational rings six and seven.<sup>92</sup>

Meanwhile the Northern League operates in a simpler scenario. The largest difference is that it does not face mainstream competition to its federalising or separatist goal equivalent to the Labour Party, although such is the fluidity of modern Italian politics that this cannot be ruled out. However the very fact that the Northern League is itself an alliance of smaller regional leagues is evidence for the existence of differing layers of identity. Within, say, the Venetian section of the Northern League, which retains its distinctive dialect name, *Liga Veneta*, there is a substantial loyalty to the region and beyond that to individual towns or rural area, the *commune* and *paese*.<sup>93</sup> Thus if one were to construct Smout-like concentric circles for the Northern Italian they would begin with the family, move through town, local area, region, nation, state, and like the Scottish model finish with the newer supranational identities of the modern age. As Bossi has spelt out: "European man, as the best sociology has noted, experiences a plurality of belongings : to the family, to the local community, to the city, to the region, to the nation or to an ethnies, to a professional or cultural group and so on."<sup>94</sup>

For some Venetians and Lombards the region is the nation, though for most some sort of Italian identity will be present, although more than half of the League activists

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<sup>92</sup> This is admitted by many activists, thus: "if we're talking about an independent Scotland then yes I think obviously the nature of the EU basket of powers diminishes the degree of autonomy that independence represents and even the fact that the SNP is now talking positively about support for a common monetary policy is a big step away from the notion that the advantages of full independence were gaining control of these economic levers to use more effectively in the Scottish context."

<sup>93</sup> "Italy is not an absolute from the historical and cultural point of view, it was always divided, Italy has existed as Italy for little over a hundred years and we have been Venetians, we have been Veronese for many years, for centuries, so I feel Northern very securely, Italian less so because Italianness is not.. - I am not a patriot."

<sup>94</sup> Lega Nord op. cit (1993) p.56.



interviewed saw themselves as exclusively Northern. Thus Italians can be seen to possess a similar type of complex identity and in this context it is interesting to consider the effect of the regional reforms of the 1970s, for in providing an alternative source of government to the corrupt centre, these directly elected assemblies, have provided a very clear point of reference for those pushing for regionalisation. As Putnam et. al. conclude in their book investigating the continuity of civic norms as a precondition of good government across centuries of Italian history:

“Over the last two decades Italy has moved significantly toward the decentralised end of that dimension (centralisation/federalism), not only in formal terms, but also in terms of practical politics and policy making...The logic of decentralisation has become self-sustaining.”<sup>95</sup>

This theme is one which will be taken up and considered in Chapter Three.

Scotland and Northern Italy then both possess a complex matrix of identities which now operate within a novel European institutional context which itself bestows a nascent supranational identity. The above discussion should make clear that neither of these identities is a simple clear-cut matter. Amongst both groups there are large differences in where the emphasis is laid and there is no reason why any particular individual's identity should be set in stone - it can shift over time. Indeed both the SNP and the Northern League actively attempt to achieve just such a shift by making national or regional identity the primary political consideration of citizens. The European Union is a boon to such partisan manoeuvre for it makes any change less clear-cut - the choice is not a stark either/or alternative which opponents can attack as a shot in the dark, but rather a move to more autonomy within an established supranational organisation, with many comparative examples available to help the arguments. In identity terms too the supranational and sub-national elements can serve as substitutes for previous loyalty to the centralised state, the process which so

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<sup>95</sup> R. Putnam et al. (1993a) “Making Democracy Work - Civic Traditions in Modern Italy” p.47.

worries Conservative Euro-Sceptics, well captured by Touraine's phrase "the denationalisation of European countries".<sup>96</sup>

Thus it seems that both in terms of what they seek to achieve and the methods employed to reach these ends, that Scotland and Northern Italy are valid subjects for comparison and as such the distinction between regionalism and nationalism is one which should not mire the study in a conceptual bog. It is hoped that terminological marriage can be made by describing both as manifestations of autonomist sentiment which seems preferable to the more cumbersome regionalist/nationalist label. This is not a cheap trick to enable comparison to be made and the differences between the two will be discussed, but they will also not be exaggerated simply because the players involved may have used a different vocabulary. As the discussion above shows much of the rhetorical difference can be seen to stem from the different historical and contemporary political contexts of the two areas, which Chapter Three will trace out in all its implications. The real political situation then must inform any such study, not inflexible political jargon. Luis Moreno has shown the worth of comparing the 'nation' of Scotland with the Spanish 'region' of Catalonia (a 'nation' to many Catalans) which he sums up thus:

"It is simplistic to believe that historical events and processes can operate in the same way and with the same results in different countries but, having said that, Scotland and Catalonia have so many features in common that it would also be unrealistic to deny beforehand a similar result in their respective paths to home rule."<sup>97</sup>

This study will employ the same type of realistic outlook on the lessons to be drawn from comparing the 'nominal' nation of Scotland with the 'nominal' region of Northern Italy, for there is a strong case to be made that the distinction between these two descriptions is increasingly blurred in the modern world. Modern autonomy movements should be seen as part of a reaction to the crisis of modernity.

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<sup>96</sup> A. Touraine (1994) 'European Countries in a Post-National Era' in C. Rootes & H. Davis (ed) *"A New Europe? Social Change & Political Transformation"* p.13.

<sup>97</sup> L. Moreno (1988) op. cit. p.180.

## **2.11 Summary**

The argument so far has run that the contemporary manifestations of autonomy face an entirely different context to those in previous epochs. A central contention has been that the differences in the modern era between nation and region are not as great as the older hegemonic theories of nationalism would propose since the nation-state is losing a considerable amount of its previous power. This is particularly the case for those European areas aspiring to greater autonomy in the future, since their autonomy is already conditional on the rules of membership to the Union and its institutions. To capture these differences conceptually the term 'post'-nationalism has been applied and it implies a Europe which is neither a community of nations nor regions solely, but both at the same time. The important question in the future becomes not so much whether a particular area constitutes a nation or region but rather how much control, democracy and accountability that community has under the Union's stated principle of subsidiarity, as David McCrone puts it:

“...the regions of Europe which matter are those which have some levers of democratic accountability - like Catalonia, Lombardy, Bavaria. These are presently content to maximise their political powers within existing state structures, until such time as they outgrow them. Simply having formal statehood may not matter very much. After all, these regions seem to carry greater economic and even political clout than the likes of Ireland, and possibly Denmark, and certainly Greece and Portugal.”<sup>98</sup>

The key to influence in the 1990's Europe is not nation-statehood but economic and political autonomy. The contention of this chapter is that Scotland and Northern Italy are searching for similar types of autonomy albeit in different ways which shows that they form valid objects of comparison with more similarities than differences.

Undoubtedly the two areas under consideration have quite divergent electoral contexts. On the one hand the Northern League faces a clean slate through the collapse of the parties which had dominated the First Republic and the lack of any significant rival with a similar autonomy appeal - a function of the League bringing

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<sup>98</sup> D. McCrone (1994b) 'Rhetorics of Regionalism' p.4.

together different smaller movements. On the other the SNP is mired in a four-party system where the dominant Labour Party is its chief rival in terms of seeking autonomy from a stagnant centre. The challenges facing the two party-political manifestations of autonomist identity are very different but it will be a contention of this study that the methods employed by both are not so divergent. After the 1996 elections the Northern League cannot be seen as simply a flash, protest party - it has a readily identifiable core constituency and geographical area - and similarly the SNP has long since ceased to be viewed in such a fashion<sup>99</sup>. Both however face similar problems in wresting power away from the centre, because they suffer from being seen to play the traditional political game at the discredited centre, for instance the criticisms levelled at the League in government or at the SNP for voting with the government over EU Committee of the Regions representation.

Despite the headline differences between the two parties, this chapter contends that these can be explained largely by the differing electoral contexts which they find themselves in - a contention to be explored by the rest of the thesis. When one delves more deeply into the reasons for their recent successes, one is drawn back time and again to questions of accountability, democracy and autonomy. Both movements are now operating in an EU context in which the boundaries between region and nation are blurring, as McCrone makes clear:

“..we confront the region as surrogate nation. Europe is littered with such examples, and many more in embryo. We may have rough and ready conceptual divisions between nation and region, but the claim to be in Benedict Anderson’s phrase an ‘imagined community’ can be conjured up without too much cultural trouble.”<sup>100</sup>

Neither the SNP nor the Northern League can be said to seek a traditional nation-state - the former seeks independence within an integrated Europe, the latter a

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<sup>99</sup> Indeed at the last election SNP voters from 1987 were just as likely to re-vote for that party as Conservative and Labour partisans (indicating a growing sense of 'belonging'), causing Brand et.al. to conclude that :“...if they were protesting, they did so twice with an interval of almost five years. Even if it were a protest vote the first time, it seems to have become an habitual sentiment.” See Brand et. al. (1992) op. cit. p.15.

<sup>100</sup> D. McCrone (1994b) op. cit. p.5.



strongly autonomous region within the same body or perhaps a form of secession. Both are reactions to the failure of two, traditional nation-states. It is the contention of this chapter that the SNP and the League have more similarities than differences, and lead us toward an understanding of contemporary autonomist sentiment in the supranational, and perhaps 'post'-national European Union. The next chapter will begin the explicit comparative analysis of the two areas by looking at the historical paths to their current situation as a means of understanding better the genesis of both these parties.

**CHAPTER THREE -**  
**SUCCESSFUL FORGERIES?**  
**A HISTORY OF THE BRITISH AND ITALIAN 'NATION-STATES'**

**3.1 Questioning the 'nation-state'**

The discussion thus far has contained a tacit assumption, evidenced by figures on the growth of the international political and economic community, that the traditional nation-state is losing power in the macro, global context. But what is the evidence for this proposition at the level of the nation-state? This chapter will attempt to provide a thorough history of the unitary states created in 1707 in Great Britain and 1861 in Italy.<sup>101</sup> It will argue that neither Great Britain nor Italy - which both emerged as unitary states binding previously differentiated peoples to a centralised legislature and then employed nationalism in their efforts to bind the populations to the states thus created - fully succeeded in their nationalising projects. Neither ever approached the homogeneous, paradigmatic nation-state which some of the literature outlined in Chapter Two would have as the norm. Instead both had considerable internal differences and multiple identities continued to exist. This is not to claim that there were not periods in which the British and Italian elements of these identities were dominant, but it will be argued that they never totally eclipsed other national and regional identities.

The argument of the chapter will be that outwith this explanatory historical context it is difficult to understand the emergence of strong autonomy movements in both Scotland and Northern Italy over the last two or three decades. The identities now

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<sup>101</sup> Most commentators date the creating moment of the Italian nation as 1861 from the symbolic handshake at Teano, just north of Naples, on October 25th between Piedmont monarch Victor Emmanuel and Giuseppe Garibaldi at which the latter handed over the South. However it was not geographically complete in its modern form until the addition of the Veneto in 1866 was followed by that of Rome in 1870 at which point the latter supplanted Florence as the new state's capital.

mobilised politically toward the goal of autonomy could not simply have been imposed from scratch. Rather they re-invigorated latent sub-official levels of belonging which had remained in the complex matrix of identities which many Northern Italians and Scots have held through the histories of their respective nation-states. What then is the respective evidence for these contentions?

### **3.2 The 'Forging' of Britain**

Linda Colley argues in her history of the first 130 years of the British state - "Britons - Forging the Nation" - that the chief forces employed in creating a British national identity were war, religion and Empire. The century-long conflict with the Catholic superpower France, allowed calls of loyalty to be made to the dominant Protestantism of the British population with the French portrayed as a backward power seeking to rob Britain of its progress, a threat mirrored in the internal spectre of Jacobitism, as Colley says:

"All of these major wars, then, challenged the political and/or religious foundations upon which Great Britain was based, and threatened its internal security and its commercial and colonial power. Consequently, its rulers were obliged, over and over again, to mobilise not just the consent, but increasingly the active co-operation of large numbers of Britons in order to repel this re-current danger from without." <sup>102</sup>

Here then is the emergence of the British 'island mentality', which built on England's pre-1707 rivalries beyond the actual islands on which England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland were situated and to which recourse has often been taken in time of war over the intervening three centuries. This use of the threat of the 'Other' is a classic building-block of traditional nationalism.

Supplementing the above militaristic Protestantism were the economic opportunities afforded by the Union. Indeed the Scottish elite's motivation for Union has most often been portrayed as an economic one, for with the disaster of the Darien

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<sup>102</sup> L. Colley (1992) "Britons - Forging the Nation"p.4.

scheme<sup>103</sup> still fresh in their minds, the wider markets and greater military security of being part of the then world's largest economic power, proved an irresistible lure. The economic benefits for Scotland were not immediately apparent but when they did come, later in the eighteenth century, they were considerable. Scotland joined the elite of the world industrial and commercial system. Contrary to the 1970s revisionism of Hechter, Scotland was no 'internal colony'<sup>104</sup> of England whose development occurred by invitation. Rather she was a vibrant partner in colonisation with prominent Scottish officials from Canada to India. Indeed Colley cites the mid-eighteenth century John Wilkes-led 'Little England' movement as evidence of the considerable resentment towards Scots perceived to be 'on the make' in London and further afield adding importantly that: "...the real significance of Wilkite complaints that Scots were invading the British polity to an unprecedented extent is, quite simply, that they were true."<sup>105</sup>

Such assimilation, however, is by no means the full story. Firstly for the vast majority of Scots, the Union of 1707 had very little discernible impact on their lives, with its concentration on the 'high' spheres of commerce and warfare. It was only by an incremental process that Britishness began to attain some meaning with the development of shared institutions such as the monarchy<sup>106</sup>, the fighting of joint, Protestant wars and vitally the growing extension of the state into the 'low' sphere through the nineteenth century (with the Poor Law, Factory Acts, the start of minimal education). In this latter sense, the British State was in Tom Nairn's phrase 'pre-modern', for it did not immediately seek to align state, nation and civil society.

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<sup>103</sup> For a full explanation at this failed attempt at colonial expansion see 'The Darien Venture' entry in J.& J. Keay (ed.) (1994) *"The Collins Encyclopaedia of Scotland"* p.219.

<sup>104</sup> M. Hechter (1975) *"Internal Colonialism - The Celtic Fringe in British National Development"*.

<sup>105</sup> L. Colley (1992) op. cit. p.117.

<sup>106</sup> Edinburgh's New Town streets were named after the House of Hanover, shortly after Walter Scott had persuaded George IV to parade in Edinburgh in a kilt and pink tights in 1822, the first visit since the Union of a reigning monarch, commemorated by a statue in George Street - see D. McCrone (1992) op. cit., p.182.



Indeed he argues that today, with its lack of constitutional or institutional reform over the intervening three centuries and its continuing central apex of the Crown :

“..what is being conserved is a pre-modern collectivity whose essential features all look back to the early-modern and the patrician - not forward to mass democracy and popular sovereignty.”<sup>107</sup>

Within this unreformed context the appeal of the nationalising project outlined by Colley could only have partial and episodic success. The very public dissent to the new British state posed by Jacobitism was an early sign of the type of dissent carried on by those who argued in favour of the French Revolution. However to confirm the complexity of identities argued for in Chapter Two there were many ‘Britons’ ready to make the ultimate sacrifice and lay down their lives for the new British ‘nation-state’ even from very early stages, as the wars of the eighteenth century testify to.

This seeming contradiction can be theoretically captured by again applying the concept of dual identity - feelings of Scottishness, Welshness, Irishness and to a lesser extent Englishness can co-exist with those of Britishness. Nairn has argued that the Great Britain which emerged after 1707 was more a 'state-nation' than a 'nation-state' and this term seems to capture well the chronology of its development. The British state pre-dated the most rapid developments of industrialisation and print capitalism - two vital components in the evolution of nationalist impulse - and as such it would never be a 'modern' nation-state where the imagined nation coincided with clearly demarcated geographical limits (although arguably there are very few examples of such smooth contiguity from any epoch of history). The British variant has always been conditioned by the dualities of these initial decades and the limits of the appeal of Britishness is demarcated thus by Bernard Crick:

“‘British’ is a political and legal concept best applied to the institutions of the UK state, to common citizenship and common political arrangements. It is not a cultural term, nor does it correspond to any real sense of nation.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> T. Nairn (1994) *“The Enchanted Glass : Britain and Its Monarchy”* p.155.

<sup>108</sup> B. Crick (1991) ‘The English & The British’ in Crick (ed.) *“National Identities - The Constitution of the UK”* p.97.

His article argues that English national identity was stunted as a consequence of England's territorial and numerical superiority, for many "to be British is simply to be English"<sup>109</sup>, but this was not the case in the smaller parts of the British Union where dual identities remained. Indeed Crick argues that much of the reason for this difference was the integrative effect which 'anti-Englishness' had in the three peripheral areas. Englishness was further retarded by the century or so in which imperialism was substituted for it and it is the resultant conceptual confusion between Englishness and Britishness which Nairn caricatures through his use of the term 'Ukania' to suggest how random a process the naming of a nation-state can appear to be to those who don't share the dominant identity. Crick argues that the end of Empire caused more problems for England than the other parts of the UK because they had nothing to fall back on due to the underdeveloped concept of Englishness.

The structure of the British state was crucial in allowing such dual identities to grow and not wither in the peripheral areas. Scotland enjoyed large-scale institutional autonomy from the outset of the supposedly unitary state - a state which at the beginning of the eighteenth century was very minimal in its functions anyway. Scotland's civil society remained largely intact after the Act of Union and manifested in the 'trinity' of autonomous institutions - the law, the church and the education system. Moreover, as the scope and capacities of the centralised state became increasingly enmeshed in the 'low' sphere of politics through the nineteenth century, control of these issues was not overseen centrally in London but devolved to Scotland. At first this control was through a series of ad hoc boards (poor law, health and the like), but was then centralised in Edinburgh in 1886 through the setting-up of the Scottish Office, as a devolutionary reaction to the setting-up of the Scottish Home Rule Association one year previously. Indeed Lindsay Paterson goes further to

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

argue that both sides in the argument acted in a 'nationalist' vein - in the sense of trying to further the interests of Scotland. Whilst proponents argued that a Scottish Office would get things done more effectively (an early argument for subsidiarity), opponents such as Lyon Playfair feared that the transfer of power from London would make Scottish policy too provincial, showing the belief that Scotland could achieve its full potential only in union, an attitude which is captured in Graeme Morton's phrase 'unionist-nationalism'<sup>110</sup>. The important factor of Scotland's distinctiveness being taken as a given is summed up by Paterson :

"The dispute was not about whether there was a Scottish national interest; it was about how best to serve it. After the office was established, its nationalist role grew. It quickly became the focus of all Scottish campaigning, even in policy areas where it had no formal remit" <sup>111</sup>

Such developments can best be analysed in Paterson's schema of 'negotiated compromise' which highlights the ongoing trade-offs and bargains on sovereignty issues which have characterised Scotland's history within the Union: "...for a small nation like Scotland, sovereignty is a negotiated process, not a condition that is acquired or lost in one cataclysmic event."<sup>112</sup>

The British nation-state created in 1707 and 'forged' thereafter allowed its 'junior partner' considerable autonomy; indeed Scotland was used as a paradigm case by Catalans, Finns and others seeking autonomy in the nineteenth century<sup>113</sup>. It should be emphasised though that for most of Britain's history there was no friction between the two identities on offer - Empire Day celebrations contained both Scottish and British flags and icons, whilst distinctively Scottish regiments carried on fighting for the integrity of the British nation. In short, the British state, never as centralised as many which followed it in the zenith of nation-state building, operated very

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<sup>110</sup> G. Morton (1993) "Unionist-Nationalism : The Historical Construction of Scottish National Identity, Edinburgh 1830-1860" [PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh].

<sup>111</sup> L. Paterson(1994) op. cit. p. 62.

<sup>112</sup> L. Paterson (1991) op. cit. p.104.

<sup>113</sup> L. Paterson (1994) op. cit. pp. 92-97.

successfully. There were outbursts of home-rule sentiment in Scotland but these were met by concessions such as the setting up of the Scottish Office as highlighted above or more recently such institutions as the Scottish Development Agency or the various industrial 'presents' granted by post-war Secretaries of State (Ravenscraig, Linwood, Invergordon). This limited autonomy served to placate short-term demands for increased sovereignty. Vitally the concessions won allowed Scottish identity to be institutionally situated in what Kellas describes as a 'political system'<sup>114</sup>; the policy networks surrounding Scottish political institutions have been important in giving political voice to what otherwise may have remained a more cultural, folkloristic entity. This is particularly important given the decline of the import of the Church through secularisation, and to a lesser extent Scottish legal distinctiveness under European law. It is these distinctive institutions which helped Scotland make good its language deficit, that is, the lack of a linguistic divide between Scotland and England other than local dialect, indeed:

"What makes Scotland unique in Europe is the combination of a strong historical consciousness of separate identity with a complete disinterest in the development of a distinctive language."<sup>115</sup>

However with the onset of modern complex democracies with universal suffrage in the twentieth century, all nation-states have come under strain to intervene more often and more deeply in the lives of their citizens. The welfare state, universal education, national power networks, transportation systems and increased tiers of government have combined with the Keynesian conception of the state's role in the direction of economic policy to create renewed need for loyalty to the more prominent central institutions if they are to have the legitimacy to work effectively. Paradoxically, these very same trends, have imbued those at sub-national levels with increased awareness of and frustration at the lack of their ability to answer the dilemmas which have emerged in the modern world. As Melucci says:

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<sup>114</sup> J. G. Kellas (1989) *"The Scottish Political System"* p.18.

<sup>115</sup> S. Rokkan & D. Urwin (1985) 'The Survival of Distinctiveness : Sources of Peripheral Identity' in *"Economy, Territory, Identity - The Politics of West European Peripheries"* p. 89.



"The process of increasing differentiation and complexity characteristic of these systems is gradually eliminating the barriers of growth that hindered the growth of capitalist systems. Yet what is interesting is the simultaneous growth of a sensed need for roots. This need...is stimulated by the uncertainty and insecurity which accompanies the increased opportunities for individualisation fostered by complex systems. The attempt to fend off insecurity and to preserve and develop memories is most evident in regionalist or ethno-nationalist movements."<sup>116</sup>

In the Scottish context where a distinct civil society helped to keep alive the idea of the 'root' of the Scottish nation on the historical plane, the legitimacy of the artificially constructed British state has been called into question. This process was heightened by the explicit appeals made by Mrs. Thatcher's governments to British nationalism as the conduit for her hegemonic, centralising project characterised by Gamble as 'the free economy in *the strong state*'<sup>117</sup>. As the prior discussion of Crick's article highlights, many in Scotland have a very stunted conception of British nationalism and certainly amongst SNP activists whom I interviewed, many simply equate British and English.<sup>118</sup> The British appeal still had some resonance in time of war, as the Falklands conflict showed, but in the main the invocation of a British nation-state has probably become increasingly redundant as a tool of mass mobilisation. The root of this redundancy is historically based through the manner in which the British state was invented and attenuated, as Colley captures well:

"..if we accept that, historically speaking, most nations have always been culturally and ethnically diverse, problematic, protean and artificial constructs that take shape very quickly and *come apart just as fast*, then we can plausibly regard Great Britain as an invented nation superimposed, if only for a while, onto much older alignments and loyalties."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> A. Melucci (1989) op.cit. p.212.

<sup>117</sup> A. Gamble (1988) "The Free Economy and the Strong State : The Politics of Thatcherism".

<sup>118</sup> These quotes from SNP activists interviewed illustrate this point:

"I think the British identity, I don't think it means much to people...Britain was invented I think to try and sort of make us feel better about the union and stuff and to try and pretend that it wasn't a takeover, it was a merger by inventing this new name."

"I don't think there is such a thing as British, you know I think there may have been but it was a manufactured thing with the Empire and all that and it's over now."

The use of such terms as 'invented' and 'manufactured' very much mirrors Linda Colley's idea of 'forgery' and highlights an enduring lack of authenticity.

<sup>119</sup> L. Colley (1992) op. cit. p.5.

The Scottish nationalist movement (wider than its merely electoral variant of the SNP<sup>120</sup>) as it has emerged in the last two and a half decades seems far more explicable on Melucci's type of account, than the more monolithic, historically-based theories outlined in Chapter Two. It seeks not to build a nation-state through education, economics and militarism inculcating loyalty, but rather to deconstruct an ageing 'state-nation'. The gels outlined by Colley of war, anti-Catholicism, Empire and latterly monarchy have all withered in their import through the development of international institutions, secularisation, decolonisation and the decline of monarchical popularity respectively. Moreover with the emergence of mass democracy it was no longer simply enough to 'absorb'<sup>121</sup> the Scottish elite through wealth and prestige to the central state. The welfare state failed in its attempt to extend such 'absorption' to the whole populace and thus demands have grown for a democratic and accountable sovereignty, albeit within the constraints imposed by the pooling of sovereignty within the European Union, instead of a merely institutional autonomy. The Scottish national movement in its broad sense seeks a successor, or at least substantial alteration to the traditional nation-state and can best be described as a 'post'-national movement as defined in Chapter Two, in that it is reactive to the process of the 'imagined nation' of Great Britain losing legitimacy. Nowhere have these developments been more obvious than in the Constitutional Convention which has seen wide involvement in plans to draw up a blueprint for a Scottish parliament, including two political parties, trade unions, churches and local government officials,

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<sup>120</sup> See P. Lynch (1994a) paper on 'The Scottish National Movement in the Twentieth Century - Elite Versus Participatory Strategies'.

<sup>121</sup> The concept of 'absorption' is a term borrowed from the Italian political lexicon. It refers to the subsuming into the machinery of the state by the ruling elite of any potentially damaging threat to the integrity of that state, summed up by Clark writing about the Liberal period at the end of the nineteenth century: "the workings of many of the institutions of liberal Italy can only be understood in terms of the rulers' need to repress, control, or 'absorb' the 'parallel' institutions of the outsiders and protesters." See M. Clark (1984) "Modern Italy, 1871-1982" p.69.

a process which has led to innovation and consensus-building, well captured by one of the Convention's chief protagonists:

"The process of seeking consensus has not just resulted in compromise; it has produced innovation. Overall the project has been a classic example of civil society at work."<sup>122</sup>

Whilst its explicit focus is the SNP, this thesis cannot make sense of current Scottish politics without considering this wider 'neo-nationalist' context and an examination of it will be undertaken later in this chapter.

### **3.3 Italy - the 'Unmade' Nation**

What though of the Italian experience? More explicitly than the British state the creation of the Italian nation one hundred and fifty-four years later fulfilled many of the requisites of the traditional theories of nationalism, meeting the credentials summed up by Zygmunt Bauman:

"Nationalism was, sociologically, an attempt made by modern elites to recapture the allegiance of the 'masses' produced by early modern transformations ...In the same way in which the modern state needed nationalism for authenticity, nationalism needed the coercive powers of the state to promote the postulated dissolution of communal identities in the uniform identity of the nation."<sup>123</sup>

This seems to capture the type of approach which Count Camillo Cavour employed in unifying the diverse and rapidly modernising city-states, monarchies and republics of the Italian peninsula midway through the last century. As quoted by Mack Smith in his study of the *Risorgimento*, only 2.5% of the population were Italian-speakers at the time of unification.<sup>124</sup> Few, including Cavour himself, had travelled far outwith their own regions, many of which had long traditions of autonomy and sovereignty stretching back hundreds of centuries, highlighted in the Putnam book on democratic traditions discussed in Chapter Two. These divisions were summed up famously in the Austrian PM, Metternich's, description of Italy as a mere

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<sup>122</sup> I. Lindsay (1992) 'The Autonomy of Scottish Politics' p. 47.

<sup>123</sup> Z. Bauman (1992a) op. cit. p.675.

<sup>124</sup> D. Mack Smith (1971) "Victor Emmanuel, Cavour and the Risorgimento" p.250.

'geographical expression'<sup>125</sup>. Given this initial terrain the *Risorgimento* appears as an elite-led nationalist project, in which the kingdom of Piedmont sought to gain a place at the European top table and in the on-going imperial scramble by unifying Italy.

It was a project which was successful in its goal in a very short period of time, owing much to the manipulation of the various populist, nationalist movements by Cavour. The philosopher and theorist Giuseppe Mazzini and the soldier and populist Giuseppe Garibaldi may have been key figures in respectively creating the intellectual climate and waging the battles of unification, but it was Cavour who reaped the benefits. The Piedmont prefecture system was quickly extended nationwide, creating a highly centralist modern state, a Piedmont writ large across the peninsula, but as Mack Smith cautions:

"The unification of Italy into a single state did not mean the obliteration of regional differences. Patriotic and regional loyalties continued to co-exist alongside each other as a fundamental fact of Italian life, and their coexistence was eventually to receive constitutional recognition in 1947 when regions were given varying degrees of autonomy." <sup>126</sup>

Italy's central state was then in no way an expression of a Kantian voluntarist will of an ethnically pre-aligned people. It was very much led by an opportunistic elite who wanted the benefits which a nation-state could bestow by the second half of the twentieth century both internally and externally.

The *Risorgimento* is held up by theorists as a paradigmatic example of modern, calculated, political nationalism<sup>127</sup>. However dual identities were prominent in the new Italian state and reminiscent of the riots in Edinburgh and Aberdeen over a century and a half earlier, there was great protest in the Southern cities of Naples and

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid. p.37 Footnote 1 "Metternich said he coined this famous phrase when arguing with Lord Palmerston in the summer of 1847, and he added that the same term could also be used of Germany".

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. p.248 The four special statute regions - Valle d'Aosta, Trentino Alto-Adige, Sardinia & Sicily, had devolved powers from this date followed by Friuli Venezia-Giulia in 1963 and by the fifteen mainland regions eventually in 1970.

<sup>127</sup> For example see J. Breuilly (1993) "Nationalism and the State" p.10.



Palermo. The specific causes may have differed but such similar events testify to the far from universal acceptance of the new 'national' order in the two states under consideration, though it is of note that most Italian protest centred in the South rather than the North where the League emerged over a century later.

It was this friction in the unification process which Mack Smith holds responsible for Cavour's choosing a centralist rather than federalist arrangement for the Italian state (those who argued for federalism, such as Carlo Cattaneo, were marginalised by the Piedmontese parliament only to be resurrected by the League over a century later, and so re-enter the academic fray<sup>128</sup>). Cavour's decision was based on political expediency rather than ideological belief and stemmed from the need to bind the population to the newly-created state - a nationalist aim best achieved through centrally appointed prefects. As quoted by Putnam the unifiers worked under D'Azeglio's dictum that: "We've made Italy, now we must make the Italians".<sup>129</sup> Mack Smith sums up well the need for centralised control:

"The suppression of the proposal to set up the regions was ...due in part to the very strength of regional feelings and to the realisation that patriotic sentiment needed time to develop."<sup>130</sup>

The unification of Italy then was a quintessentially political nationalist project. However aim and actuality are far from necessary partners in the process of nation-building and Italy was no exception in facing many subsequent problems.

In this sphere the recent historical study by Christopher Duggan provides interesting reading with its central thesis of the difficulties which faced Italian rulers in binding a population whose lives had always centred around local communes and communities to the new Italian nation, thus:

"Since its creation in 1861, Italy has struggled to develop an effective political system and a secure sense of national identity. This concise history... looks in particular at the difficulties Italy has faced during

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<sup>128</sup> See volume of Cattaneo's work and commentaries upon it by contemporary figures in D. Vimercati (ed.) (1991) *"Stati Uniti d'Italia : il Federalismo, le Leghe"*.

<sup>129</sup> R. Putnam et. al. (1993a) op. cit.- *'Fatta l'Italia, dobbiamo fare gli italiani'* p.18.

<sup>130</sup> D. Mack Smith (1971) op. cit. p. 273.

the last two centuries in *forging* a nation state (my italics).”<sup>131</sup>

Duggan’s work then bears a noteworthy resemblance to Linda Colley’s survey of Great Britain. Both assess the attempts to unify diverse peoples into a single nation in terms of the manifest current failure of the project. In Britain the bonds of war with France, expanding Empire, anti-Catholicism and economic prosperity have faded and the substantial *de facto* devolution of powers from London, which Paterson argues granted Scotland a sufficient degree of autonomy to stifle any elite-led nationalist movement has been undercut by the Thatcherite hegemonic project, as argued in the previous section of this chapter. In Italy meanwhile the strongest unifying gel came paradoxically as a reaction to the failed fascist nationalist project of 1922-1943 but the bond of anti-fascism has itself been undermined by the Christian Democrat penetration of the state and the marginalisation in the First Republic of the communist subculture. The spectacular collapse of the First Republic in scandal was, on Duggan’s account, merely the nadir of a long downward slide. The emergence of the Northern League as an enduring product and partial cause of this decline is symptomatic of severe limitations in the Italian nationalist project as reflected by the low number of Northerners who stress their ‘Italian-ness’, for Duggan:

“Its growth...bore witness to the fact that Italy had yet to find a secure identity. Talk of greater regional autonomy, federalism and even the secession of the North from the South, showed that a hundred and thirty years of unity had failed to produce agreement as to what the Italian nation was or should be.”<sup>132</sup>

Many amongst the League activists feel loyalty to the North or their region or perhaps their specific commune rather than the Italian state.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> C. Duggan (1994) “*A Concise History of Italy*” Preface, p.i.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p.294.

<sup>133</sup> Two quotes from League activists back this up :

“Italy has very little meaning for me, it is a geographical expression, it is made up of many little states with their own peculiarities and their own characteristics..it is obvious in our context after a hundred and thirty years of unity, a unity forced on various states, more or less willing, there is a certain consciousness of independence and the desire to express difference in respect to the others has remained..you cannot cancel out a history of more than a thousand years in the case of the Veneto in just over a hundred years.”

The picture emerging is one of enduring identities at a sub-national level, but as in the British case it would be ridiculous to sustain that there was no 'imagined community' of Italy, rather it is argued here that it was never as complete or hegemonic as much analysis of nationalism would have us believe. Quite simply the nation-state was never 'made' to the extent that some theories and histories would argue, and as a consequence the decline in its legitimacy is less hard to explain.

How successful then was the centralising project? How much legitimacy did the nation-state gain? How much has it retained into the modern age? In geographical and centralising terms, the unified Italy was very successful, with the addition of Rome in 1870 bringing the whole peninsula under Victor Emmanuel's jurisdiction. The Italian state was quickly established both internally through the Piedmont-style prefectural control and the rapid expansion of Italian as the language of bureaucratic and educational discourse (a crucial factor in Gellner's schema<sup>134</sup>, made easier in the Italian case by the comparatively late stage of print capitalism and more recent impact of twentieth century communication technologies<sup>135</sup>) and externally as an international player and small colonial power, picking up the African scraps left by France and Britain. Indeed the centrally-appointed prefects were to remain the most important figure in Italian political life for over a century; as Martin Clark has observed the administrative tradition of the united Italy has remained 'highly

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"I feel identified with the North of Italy, Padanian."

<sup>134</sup> E. Gellner (1983) op. cit. p. 34 "The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence."

<sup>135</sup> This argument is highlighted by B. Anderson (1983) op. cit. in Chapter Three 'The origins of national consciousness' pp.37-46. Though the entrenched nature of many dialects and the continued existence of a large peasant population meant that it took the arrival of the mass electronic media to entrench Italian as a language of national discourse - see interview with Umberto Eco 'The Guardian' [30/9/95] p. 27 in which he says "You must remember that in Italy in the fifties, the number of Italians who didn't speak Italian but only local dialect was enormous. Television played an important role. After television, the Sicilian immigrant who arrived in Turin was able to interact on the basis of a common language."

centralist' and they were particularly important as vote-getters at the time of elections.<sup>136</sup>

For Mack Smith many of the problems in creating an 'Italian' identity can be traced back to manner in which unification was conducted which caused many in the South to see the Piedmontese as simply latest in a long line of invaders, whilst:

"Too many politicians in Turin identified Italian nationality with merely the enlargement of Piedmont, as shown by imposition of their own laws and institutions on regions with different traditions about which they knew little."<sup>137</sup>

Concurrent to such centralism, however, ran the practice of local '*trasformismo*'<sup>138</sup> which while insisting on the presence of the prefect as an overseer, in practice allowed local elites considerable autonomy in terms of patronage and so allowed the clientelistic nature of local politics to continue unabated from pre-unification days, with the prefect effectively co-opted as a member of the localised elite. Such clientelism was especially prevalent in the traditionally feudal and hierarchical *Mezzogiorno* and lasted untouched through the Fascist interlude, before becoming enshrined in the Christian Democrat (DC) dominance of the First Republic. Did this centralised system succeed in binding the population to the Italian state?

The answer to this question is more negative than positive - all commentators on contemporary Italy are agreed on one thing, namely the lack of public trust and loyalty in the institutions of the central state. Italy has consistently ranked in the bottom three (with Spain and Greece) in Eurobarometer surveys of public content

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<sup>136</sup> M. Clark (1975) op. cit. p.44.

<sup>137</sup> D. Mack Smith (1994) "Mazzini" p.159.

<sup>138</sup> A term with no real English translation other than 'transformism', coined in the 1880's to describe 'absorption' into the political centre of left and right and carried on in the First Republic as evidenced in the large number of coalitions bolstered by two or three small parties, for example in the '*pentapartito*' or 'five-party' governments of the Craxi-Andreotti-Fanfani era - see F. Spotts & T. Weiser (1986) "Italy - A Difficult Democracy" pp.113-115.



with government<sup>139</sup> and since the Second World War, there have been consistent calls for a decentralisation of government. In 1948 a provision for directly elected regional governments was written into the republic's constitution and this mandate was carried out in the four 'special' statute regions - Valle d'Aosta, Trentino Alto-Adige, Sardinia and Sicily - almost immediately, with Friuli-Venezia Giulia added in 1963. However for the remainder of the regions not deemed to possess clearly differentiated linguistic or ethnic claims, the setting up of regional governments met huge political resistance from the DC, fearful of communist (PCI) control of important central regions and the Roman bureaucracy. Finally in the midst of the large social upheavals of the late 1960s the regional law was passed (despite a record-breaking filibuster by conservatives) and the first regional governments were elected in 1970 - the first blow in a century against the monolithic Italian state.

In the first few years after 1970, these new institutions had very little real autonomy with Rome despatching party apparatchiks to fill prominent bureaucratic positions and so preserve clientelistic continuity, rather in the manner of Cavour's prefectural rule. However the Prime Minister Andreotti was forced to pass Decree No. 616 in 1976 to obtain PCI support for his ailing coalition and with the consequent unblocking of some of their social and economic leeway, the powers of the regions began to increase, causing Putnam to observe that : "Over the last two decades the region has become an authentic, autonomous, and increasingly distinctive arena in Italian politics."<sup>140</sup> In the context of nationalism and 'post'-nationalism under

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<sup>139</sup> In the second 1992 Eurobarometer survey of satisfaction with the working of democracy in one's country Italy had slipped to a mere 12%, compared with the next lowest Greece on 36% and Spain on 41%; Denmark topped the survey with 80% satisfaction and the EC average stood at 45%, which Britain was just above on 48% only 4% above its lowest ever rating of 44%. The figure equalled Italy's worse showing in 1977, at the height of its terrorist period, since the question was first asked in 1973 - See Commission of the European Communities (1994) 'Eurobarometer - Public Opinion in the European Union Trends 1974-1994' Table B2.

<sup>140</sup> R. Putnam et. al. (1993a) op. cit. p.47 - however this general conclusion conceals substantial de facto differences in the relevance of the regional bodies and in those regions in which one city dominates such as Turin in Piedmont or Genoa in Liguria, the impact of the

analysis, these regions have helped provide a concrete base for anti-state feeling by displaying the limited ability of a corrupt and centralised state to meet the demands of the most modern regions, namely those in the North. For Putnam and his colleagues the remarkable differences in the performance of regional governments between the North and the South since 1970 which they highlight have very deep historical roots:

"Some regions of Italy are blessed with vibrant networks and norms of civic engagement, whilst others are cursed with vertically structured politics, a social life of fragmentation and isolation, and a culture of distrust. These differences in civic life turn out to play a key role in explaining institutional success."<sup>141</sup>

This is an argument which echoes that concerning the differentiation of Scotland's civil society within the British Union and the claim that the Scottish nation is a more egalitarian one and a 'principled' society. The creation of the Italian regional governments in 1970 started to provide a degree of autonomy more akin to that enjoyed by Scotland from the outset of the Union. This allowed autonomy and sovereignty to become once more negotiable issues, one hundred and nine years after the imposition of a highly centralised unitary state. One upshot of the renegotiation thus started may have been the emergence of those who sought to forge regionalism into a viable political force, or at the very least there was a coincidence in timing dependent on the more general factors of modernity which were calling the centralised state into question as outlined in Chapter Two. Such moves started modestly with the dialect-centred Venetian League in 1979 but quickly grew into the more broadly based Lombard League and then the encompassing Northern League by the start of the 1990s, as Chapter Four will show. The linking thread of these organisations was their opposition to the traditional Italian nation-state and the parties which had come to be seen as synonymous with the central state and its consequent illegitimacy in the affairs of the modern North, especially regarding its

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regional assemblies as a level of government is much reduced with the city council still central.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. p.15.

inequitable share of the national tax burden. As such Bossi's League has started to overcome the inertia imposed by the centralised state by questioning the initial nation-wide settlement and its modern-day manifestation, reflected in Bossi's frequent quoting of the federalist thinker, Carlo Cattaneo. The League has started to overcome Clark's 'Metternich principle' <sup>142</sup>, which holds that regional sentiments must be politicised by elites, if they are to become governing areas, rather than mere 'geographical expressions'.

The elite of the Northern League have proved themselves capable of being such a conduit in mobilising support behind their plans for a Northern republic, which were modified to proposals for three highly devolved macro-regions and then further adjusted to two proposed parliaments in the North at Mantua and in the South at an undetermined destination, with the parliament in Rome perhaps making up the third component, or being bypassed completely by independence. The consistent focus of their rhetoric and propaganda has been Rome as the symbol of the centralised Italian state and they have discussed at length the failure of the nationalist project to meet the needs of the peoples of the Italian peninsula. Mirroring Putnam, the League draw on the history of the North to invoke a less corrupt system of government in a more horizontal society, as Bocca makes clear :

"It is not that the ignoring of laws in the South comes from an ethnic or racial factor, given that millions of southern emigrants practice respect for the law, but it derives from a different culture."<sup>143</sup>

This is a sentiment widely shared amongst League activists<sup>144</sup> and it can be inferred amongst Northern Italians in general by the large numbers voting for the Northern

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<sup>142</sup> See Chapter One, Footnote 6.

<sup>143</sup> G. Bocca (1990) "La Disunita d'Italia - Per Venti Milioni di Italiani la Democrazia e in Coma e l'Europa si Allontana" p.23.

<sup>144</sup> The following two quotes from League supporters interviewed help make this clear: "For me, they are very different in culture, the North of Italy was influenced by the French, by the Germans, whilst the South of Italy was influenced by Spaniards, Arabs and Greeks - really two cultures, they are two nations, they have two different ways of living." "For me it's a question of culture, I don't identify with a Southern culture at all, because it seems too different from my region and origins, in terms of liberty to live one's life, the

League. The evidence of the systemic ignoring of laws across all of Italy is swept aside as the Machiavellian tactics of survival and the League trumpet the fact that *tangentopoli* started in Milan rather than in the South as evidence that only there could the moral fibre be found to attack the corrupt consensus.<sup>145</sup> They seek an ending to the first Italian republic and hark back to the federalist arguments at the time of unification. In their quest for a negation of the Italian nationalist project and its replacement with a far more devolved system within the wider context of a Europe of the regions, the Northern League is a manifestation of the contemporary failure of the Italian nationalist project. It is the contention of this thesis that it can be said to represent a 'post'-nationalist movement, similar to that which can be found in Scotland.

### **3.4 One Goal, Two Paths**

The advantage of this terminological shift means that one is not tied to solely national units in a world where their powers are being squeezed from above and below, as outlined in Chapter Two. Both the Northern League and the Scottish National Party are committed to a Europe of the regions. Both base much of their rhetoric and appeal on the bankruptcy of the Italian and British states. Both operate in a political context where the distinctions between nations and regions are becoming increasingly blurred. Neither bear more than nominal resemblance to the nationalist movements of previous centuries, operating in an environment in which language and education have been long entrenched. Instead they both seek democratic autonomy to meet the demands of the late twentieth century by moving beyond the solution offered by their respective nations. In this sense they are both

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mode of trade they are different, also inter-personal relationships for example the bigotry and closure of the South, thus it's very different."

<sup>145</sup> C. Richards (1994) "*The New Italians*" [Michael Joseph, 1994] see description in Ch. 3 'Cosi fan tutti or Everyone's on the Take'.

‘post’-nationalist movements, or as MacCormick has recently described the concept as ‘new nationalism’<sup>146</sup>. Whatever the moniker, these parties are certainly different and the thesis’ prime aim is to explain the content of this difference and to start to explain the reasons for it.

The next chapter will concentrate on an explicit analysis of the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League over the last two decades in order to establish the grounds for the type of explicit comparison to be undertaken in Chapters Five and Six. The remainder of this chapter will attempt to provide empirical evidence for the claim which is being advanced by this thesis about the two areas of the states under specific consideration, namely that Scotland and Northern Italy are searching for similar types of autonomy albeit with different methods and so show that they form valid objects of comparison with more similarities than differences. Put simply they are following different paths to a similar goal.

### **3.5 Re-emergent Regions**

The Italian nation-state has had ethnic and linguistic differences from its inception in the *Risorgimento* of the last century - the legal entity of Italy may have been created but it was one full of diversity with little Gramscian ‘hegemony’ between the elite who had forged unification and the people as Clark sums up:

“In d’Azeglio’s famous phrase, the *Risorgimento* had ‘made Italy’, but it had not made Italians. Italian politics always had to be about reconciling, or containing, deeply engrained social differences and conflicts - of class, of faith, of ideology, of ethnic or linguistic group, of regional culture and regional interest.”<sup>147</sup>

However the various duchies and republics which came together in the *Risorgimento* do not neatly concur with the regions delineated in the 1970 reform and used as the

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<sup>146</sup> N. MacCormick (1995b) in his unpublished paper ‘Liberalism, Nationalism and the Post-Sovereign State’ p.2.

<sup>147</sup> M. Clark (1984) op. cit. p.2.



basis of mobilisation by the Northern League through its umbrella association of various regional leagues (Lombardy, Piedmont and the Veneto being the three most important). Thus while Gallagher is right that : "...historically and culturally a single Italian people has never existed and to say so is to honestly face up to a division that has existed for centuries"<sup>148</sup> , it is equally true that a single Northern Italian or Padanian people has never existed either institutionally or even in Anderson's sphere of the imagination, although there is some degree of joint history and myths in the area known as the *Triveneto*, which broadly equates to the modern North-East of the country. Even if such Northern-ness had existed, the huge migrations which Italy underwent in the first two decades of the post-second world war era were of such a scale that it is impossible to talk of distinct historical communities co-opted into the nation over a century ago retaining their uniqueness, as one could argue of the Basques in Spain. In a sense then, there appears to be something superficial about the identity espoused by the Northern League because after centuries of quiescence the Lombard warrior suddenly arose to awake the North, although *leghisti* (League partisans) would argue it was the inevitable consequence of the corrupt First Republic. This has echoes of the type of argument employed by Putnam et.al. who, in seeking to explain the huge variance of performance in regions since the 1970 shake-up, invoke the world of 13th century Northern city-states and Southern kingdoms.<sup>149</sup> Both make an appealing impression as a possible explanation but fail to answer the important, factual question of what happened to the intervening centuries.

Proponents of Italian regional identity can, however, make an answer to this argument by pointing to the arguments which surrounded the choice of a centralised state at the time of the *Risorgimento*, specifically the arguments for a federalist

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<sup>148</sup> T. Gallagher (1992b) 'Rome at Bay : The Challenge of the Northern League to the Italian State' p. 481.

<sup>149</sup> R.Putnam et.al. (1993a) op.cit. pp.121-137.

solution proffered by Cattaneo, and from then to the struggles through monarchy, fascism and institutionalised clientelism. Only with the removal of the international cleavage at the end of the 1980s did regional identity have space to blossom in the Italian political system; previously it seems there just weren't enough votes up for grabs, for any regional proclivities were subsumed in '*il voto di appartenenza*' - the vote of belonging - in the subcultural North and '*il voto di scambio*' - the vote of exchange - in the clientelistic South.<sup>150</sup> Dwayne Woods portrays the end of the Cold War as combining with the economic development of the North and the 1970 regional reforms to shatter the post-war settlement of which the Christian Democrats had stood as epitome; together they created space for '*il voto di opinione*'<sup>151</sup> - the vote of opinion - to grow. The first two of these factors are now accepted as givens in any discussion of the crisis of the First Republic but the third deserves more attention since intuitively it would seem that a devolution of considerable power to the regions would allay not increase subsequent demands for regional autonomy. However, the manner in which these reforms were implemented was typical of the distributional politics of the party-controlled Italian state with many centrally appointed officials allocated to DC or Socialist (PSI) controlled councils. As such the Italian regions had the carrot of greater control held out before them only to see further sclerosis at the centre block any real developments. The appetite for autonomy was whetted in an experience which would provide succour to Scottish Conservative 'slippery slope' adherents, as Putnam puts it "Discontent with the practical performance of the regional government has not undermined popular support for a strong and autonomous regional institution."<sup>152</sup> Although as previously mentioned the strength of any institutional vacuum at the regional level depends very much on the make-up

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<sup>150</sup> For a full discussion of these different types of vote see R. Mannheimer & G. Sani (1986) 'Electoral Trends & Political subcultures' in R. Leonardi & R. Nanetti (ed.) 'Italian Politics - A Review 1' pp.164-175.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> R. Putnam et. al. (1993a) op. cit. p.57.

of internal geography of any given region, regional reform at least removed the debate on effective government from solely Roman terms of reference.

Where though does this leave consideration of a distinct Venetian, Lombard, or now Northern, identity? A useful discussion of the identities employed by the various leagues to mobilise support is conducted by Percy Allum as he analyses the mechanism through which Bossi captured the widespread dissension against the traditional parties and translated this into votes after the collapse of the subcultural bonds. He draws a distinction between the different leagues, focusing explicitly on the *Liga Veneta*, which, founded in 1979, was the oldest of those who united under the Northern League banner in February 1991. It started off as a very distinct party campaigning for use of the Venetian dialect in schools and public places and garnered 5% of the regional vote in 1983; however it had slumped to only 1.7% by 1989 and only revived its electoral fortunes by alliance with Bossi. Allum provides real insight into the Northern League in the following instructive quote:

"This was not just a case of personal charisma; it was above all a case of conception and strategy. The *Liga Veneta's* strategy was based on a conception of territorial identity : the region as the source of values and historical identity. This limited the possibility of communication with the wider population which had more urgent material problems. Bossi realised this and quickly played down the symbolic elements and gave priority to *instrumental* ones. Territorial identity was used simply as a basis for the representation and conflict of interests. The region, quickly replaced by the North, was a mere marker for the larger conflict of interests : north vs. south, producers vs. non-producers, market logic vs. welfare logic, efficiency vs. inefficiency. Hence the *Lega Nord* quickly established itself as the producers' party against the state and its accomplices."<sup>153</sup>

Here then one sees a dichotomy between traditional nationalism, based on explicit ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic considerations, and its modern Italian variant, in that the latter will subjugate many traditional values to the instrumental desire for power. However one must be careful of imposing hegemony on a very

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<sup>153</sup> P. Allum (1992) '*The Liga Veneta*' pp17-19. Note that the spelling of League with an 'i' not an 'e' reflects the use of the Venetian dialect.

heterogeneous North of Italy. For instance Diamanti quotes Franco Rocchetta, former leader of the Liga Veneta, that “..for us the Veneto, equal to Lombardy, Tuscany, Sicily, is a nation with the same rights as Denmark, France, Poland, Greece and Holland.”<sup>154</sup> The strength of Venetian identity in particular is shown by Table 3.1 below, again from Diamanti:

**Table 3.1<sup>155</sup>**  
**Feelings of Territorial Belonging in Lombardy and the Veneto (%)**

Feel closest to..	All Northerners	Close to League	Lombard 'Leghisti'	Venetian 'Leghisti'
Local town/Commune	21	18	20	16
Region	24	28	29	27
North	9	22	15	30
Italy	23	9	13	3
Europe/World	12	23	23	23
N=	660	145	78	67

Thus although many commentators characterise the Northern League as pragmatic and populist, there is a very definite identity which is being mobilised as the analysis above shows. 44% of Lombard adherents and 57% of Venetian supporters see themselves as belonging primarily to their region or the North and the same survey reveals that 35% of League supporters feel themselves to be far from the South. Umberto Bossi was the key figure in marrying this nascent regional identity to political activity in the form of demands for autonomy, for Gallagher:

“Bossi defined a new community in historical and territorial terms and used provocative language and imagery to identify threats to the viability of the community...Perhaps his greatest achievement to date has been to unite regionalist movements, prone to split and always jealous of their own identity within a single movement.”<sup>156</sup>

<sup>154</sup> I. Diamanti (1993) op. cit.p.52.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.p.100 Table 9 from Poster Survey on political attachments in Vicenza and Padua in the Veneto and Brescia and Bergamo in Lombardy conducted in December 1992 and January 1993. The first column gives the results of all 660 of those resident in these places, the next one gives the 22% or 145 of the survey who identified themselves as League voters, figures which are then broken down in columns three and four into their Lombard (78) and Venetian (67) components.

<sup>156</sup> T. Gallagher (1993) 'Regional Nationalism & Party System Change : Italy's Northern League' p.617.

Bossi openly admits now that in the early days he sought to create the impression that the various leagues were simply harmless, linguistic-based groups with no real grasp of Rome's machinations. He is quoted to this effect by Joseph Farrell: "We pretended to be what we were not - nostalgically simple-minded for lost dialects and brutally intolerant of Southerners. The journalists fell for it."<sup>157</sup> Thus to Bossi and those around him in the tight hierarchy which controls the Northern League it seems that any conception of ethnic difference is employed merely as a means to their autonomist end. Whilst there are undoubtedly adherents to more strict ethnic and linguistic definitions of what a future 'republic of the north' should look like, the split between Bossi and Miglio on the former's lack of move toward a federalisation of the state after coming to power in the March 1994 general election informs one that the prevailing attitude from above on the use of regional identity is an instrumental one, aiming to prise autonomy from the central state rather than create a Gellner type nation in which 'ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones'<sup>158</sup>. As such the aims of the Northern League appear much closer to the more fluid model of 'post'-nationalism being developed here than to any traditional, hegemonic model of nationalism, with the central concern of accountability and a pragmatic use of identity to achieve this end.

### **3.6 Becoming a Nation again**

What, though, of the Scottish variant? Here the historical pathway within the centralised state has been very different, for whilst Scotland has lacked its national status for almost three centuries it has enjoyed substantial autonomy within the British nation-state (or 'state-nation'). The conduits of such 'managerial autonomy' are laid out very clearly by Lindsay Paterson in his discussion of the Treaty of Union through the years, which has at its heart the contention previously discussed that

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<sup>157</sup> Quoted in J.Farrell (1993) 'The Lombard League - Regionalism Italian Style?' p.15.

<sup>158</sup> E. Gellner (1983) op.cit. p.1.



sovereignty is a 'negotiated process'. Thus Scottish identity has had considerable opportunity for its own self-maintenance through the institutions negotiated in 1707 - the famous Holy Trinity of law, church and education - and those devolved during the process of negotiation - initially ad hoc boards, later consolidated under the auspices of the Scottish Office and concurrently through its significant cultural differences from the rest of the UK . In such a context, where the bulk of the 'efficient' part of the state resided in Scotland there was little need for political nationalism on the part of the Scottish middle-class since all they could have added were highly constrained economic and foreign policies, indeed Scotland occupied a position analogous to small states in Europe, for Paterson:

"Scotland has been autonomous for most of the three centuries since the Union - not a fully independent state, of course, but more than a mere province. It has been at least as autonomous as other small European nations, for which the reality of politics has always been the negotiation of partial independence amid the rivalry of the great powers. The forms of Scottish autonomy have changed as the state and society and the economy have changed, and what one generation might regard as autonomy might be felt by their successors to be dependency; we must be wary of that Whig aberration of judging the past by the standards of the present."<sup>159</sup>

However, over the course of this democratising century the extension of the suffrage, coinciding with the international developments already outlined in the previous chapter, has called into question the bureaucratic compromise and negotiated autonomy which characterised the response to Scottish demands in the first two hundred years plus of the Union. Nowhere is this clearer than in current discussions dealing with popular sovereignty. The central concept to emerge in this discourse is that of the 'democratic deficit' which highlights the lack of accountability of the Scottish bureaucratic state over the last two decades and calls for a redressing of this balance either through devolution or wholesale independence. Crucially, in the context of this crisis of legitimacy, the combination of the neo-liberal Thatcherite attack on this devolved bureaucracy and the increasing inability of the traditional

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<sup>159</sup> L. Paterson (1994) op. cit. p.4.

British state to meet the economic and social demands of the late twentieth century, has helped create a re-birth of a more political Scottish identity, as Paterson highlights:

"Pulling all these strands of contemporary development together, we have a weakening of the bargains which have held the Union in place, an autonomous reinvention of Scottish identity, and a probably growing indifference to British state institutions."<sup>160</sup>

Such discussion of 're-invention' and 'indifference' seems to mirror much more closely the type of dynamic used in describing the Northern League. What it suggests is that the identity now manifested by Scottish civil society may be substantially different from previous manifestations of Scottish identity, in that it is more politicised. Indeed the current identity may be largely explicable as a reaction to the same type of problems already discussed in the Italian context, namely those stemming from the crisis of the lack of democracy and accountability of traditional nation-states in the late twentieth century.

With its anti-centralism and complex demand for different shades of autonomy contemporary Scotland does not fit neatly into the paradigmatic models of nationalism outlined earlier, as Table 3.2 overleaf makes clear:

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<sup>160</sup> L. Paterson (1991) op. cit. p.116.

**Table 3.2<sup>161</sup>**  
**Scottish versus British National Identity**

	SGY '88 %	ICM'91 %	ICM '92 %	SES '92 %	ROWN '92 %
Scottish not British	39	40	32	19	37
Scottish > British	30	29	29	40	27
Scottish = British	19	21	29	33	25
British > Scottish	4	3	3	3	4
British not Scottish	6	4	6	2	5
None of these	2	3	1	1	2

The above data shows that for many Scots identity is not a simple concept and many profess to having dual identity shared between their Britishness and Scottishness. Such duality will be examined in depth in the next chapter, for now it is enough to have evidenced the complexity of identities in both the North of Italy and Scotland. Scotland is undoubtedly a nation, but is not a nation-state. Many Scots do not desire full statehood but rather devolved economic and social powers - a limited autonomy which would make Scotland stronger in controlling her own destiny. Some want full-blown independence, though there is no neat correlation between these voters and SNP support, and most of these would immediately subsume such independence within a deepening and widening European Union. Scotland then seems to represent a confused example of the new type of autonomism or 'post'-nationalism which this chapter has tried to highlight.

Whilst the bulk of the quantitative and qualitative work to evidence this theoretical discussion will be reported in Chapters Five and Six, it is worthwhile to conclude this historical chapter by bringing the story right up-to-date with a discussion of the issue of identity in the partisan context. The problem with any discussion of the

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<sup>161</sup> The question posed runs 'We are interested to know how people living in Scotland see themselves in terms of their nationality. Which of these statements best describes how you regard yourself?' and the five sources are L. Moreno (1988) op. cit., ICM poll (September 1991), ICM poll (April 1992), the Scottish Election Survey (April 1992) and the Rowntree State of the Nation poll conducted by MORI (1992).

change in the direction of an identity is that the change does not occur in a vacuum, in fact it must occur in relation to previous definitions of identity. Thus the Scottish identity of the current Thatcherite/Major generation has, of course, been shaped by the events and attitudes of those years but it is refracted through the lens of the Scottish identity of the corporatist generation in the sense that they gave meaning to what it was to be Scottish both before and during the period in which the next generation forges its Scottishness. Nor are these identities mutually exclusive as was made clear earlier in the discussion of Smout's concentric circles, as Paterson has pointed out in an editorial on 'Scottishness':

"..the core of the problem is that debate about Scottish culture has little room for the idea that there might be several and deeply contradictory cultures co-existing, all of them with an equally valid claim to being truly Scottish."<sup>162</sup>

Thus any discussion of a changing identity must be tempered by this very valid idea that being Scottish or Northern Italian can mean very different things to different people *at the same time*. However, it still seems valid to talk of the dominant strand of a given identity and the strictures which it may face.

Luis Moreno completed his thesis research comparing Scotland and Catalonia in 1986 and in an article based on that work in the Scottish Government Yearbook of 1988 compared the attitudes and strategies of the two autonomist movements. He contrasted the 'reactive' nature of Catalan separatists with the more 'assertive' characteristics of their Scottish counterparts and vitally highlighted the near irrelevance of party distinction in the Catalan case as opposed to the virtual partisan sclerosis which Scotland had by the mid-1980s. Thus the '*Assemblea de Catalunya*' encompassed Liberals, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, Socialists, Communists, trade union representatives, community associations, intellectuals and ordinary Catalans. The inter-party discussion and negotiation cannot be underestimated in the achievement of Catalan home rule, for by bringing the debate

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<sup>162</sup> L.Paterson (1993) 'Scottishness' p.1.



into the broadest possible public realm, the widest possible consensus was achieved, resulting in 88.1% of those who voted in the 1979 referendum backing the assembly's plan. In that same year 51.6% of Scots voting also chose devolution in the home-rule referendum but were thwarted by the 40% rule introduced to the Bill by the British Labour Party, which meant that the referendum failed because despite a majority of those voting the 'yes' vote did not break through the 40% of the electorate required.

This episode surely serves as a totem for all Scottish autonomists for whilst the majority of Scots, both above and below, have increasingly voiced the desire for some form of democratic autonomy over the last two decades, such demands have always been subordinated to the priorities of each party. The fissures and recriminations which characterised the lead-up and the aftermath of the 1979 referendum are a case in point. Thus whilst Moreno's counsel was that : "... (a) climate of political consensus is the sine-qua-non requirement prior to any further development."<sup>163</sup> partisanship has remained king for the various Scottish players. It is not enough to claim that consensualism is a particularly Catalan value, one must seek explanation as to why it is so difficult to achieve in the Scottish context. Nowhere was this more evident than in Scotland's own Constitutional Convention : the Labour Party joined only reluctantly, though later displayed the zealotry of a typical convert, there was no Scottish Conservative Party still committed to trenchant unionism and most importantly the SNP, under its new leadership, deigned the Convention too accepting of the status quo and so withdrew its support before any discussions had really started. Thus instead of a Catalan-type coalition of forces to gain a wide consensus, what occurred was a confusing mass of contradictory signals typified by the SNP pushing the idea of a multi-option referendum from outside the Convention. It is this entrenched partisanship which provides the best explanation for

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<sup>163</sup> L. Moreno (1988) op. cit. p.173.

the huge let-down which April 1992 proved for those seeking constitutional change, with only Aberdeen South changing hands (Conservative gain) and Glasgow Govan and Kincardine and Deeside reverting back to Labour and Conservatives respectively from the by-elections wins of SNP and Liberal Democrats.

Thus there can be little doubting the partisan rigidity of the supposed purveyors of Scottish political identity, and the possibility of inter-party co-operation since 1992 has remained moribund and is likely to stay so with the virulently anti-SNP, George Robertson as Labour's shadow Scottish Secretary. In this 'above', elite sphere, certainly, little has changed and there is scant evidence for a new, different form of identity or its political manifestation of 'post'-nationalism. However this study is premised on analysis both from above and below, and given the peculiar constraints placed on all players in a democracy unaccustomed to radical change (a hugely different terrain to that inhabited by Bossi and the League), it might prove more instructive to analyse what has been happening in identity terms below.

This is no easy task and encounters precisely those problems expounded by Paterson in that there is never one homogeneous identity existing in a given civic society, despite the best efforts of such ethnic nationalists as Settler Watch. However, there seems persuasive evidence that outwith the partisan sphere, changes have been occurring in Scottish civil society which represent a qualitative break with past conceptions of Scottish identity. These changes are summed up by Andrew Marr, thus:

"Civil politics may be defined as politics that involves significant numbers of people outside the parties...It happens only rarely in a developed democracy, where the aggressive competition of parties is essential to the system. Civil politics occurs when voters, including party members, think that the party system is failing to answer a specific demand."<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> A. Marr (1992) "The Battle for Scotland" p.165.

The evidence for such a rise in civil politics is convincing for whilst the negative, partisan side of the Constitutional Convention was highlighted above, on the positive side it did embrace a considerable number of civil organisations such as the Catholic Church, the Church of Scotland, the umbrella organisation of Scottish local government, COSLA, and the STUC. Moreover, there has been a considerable cultural renaissance in Scotland over the last two decades ranging from popular music to Clydeside fiction and the new cultural heroes are often actively involved in non-partisan movements for Scottish autonomy (from pop stars Pat Kane and Ricky Ross, to the novelist William McIlvanney). That their home rule message is striking a chord is surely evidenced by the numbers attending such events as Scotland's 'Big Day' and the various marches for democracy. Pressure groups always perform this role in a stagnant partisan context but previously in Scottish politics such pressure has been a role largely left to the SNP and its cultural affiliates; the reaction to 1979 saw the consensus for some form of change widen considerably with an average around 70% desiring some form of constitutional change in recent opinion polls.

In terms of the discussion of differing identities, this 'civil' nationalism seems much more akin to that outlined in the Italian context; it is much less clearly defined, still residing largely in the womb of civil society, but its central concerns are the lack of accountability of government in Scotland and the perceived injustices of a Westminster government dismissive of Scottish interests. It is a reaction conceived by the contemporary crisis of the traditional British state, one which was still-born in April 1992 but which has remained expectant<sup>165</sup>, awaiting the arrival of more able partisan midwives. The over-riding clash here would seem to be between instrumentality and partisan rigidity. There is a new form of autonomy struggling to be born in Scotland because the elite as yet have not managed to channel the new

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<sup>165</sup> Witness the substantial street protest to coincide with the holding of the EU Council of Ministers meeting in Edinburgh in December 1992, bringing attention to the ceremonial rather than tangible importance afforded to the city during a summit at which attempt was made to define the principle of subsidiarity - an irony not lost on the estimated 30,000 Scots who marched in protest. See [*The Scotsman*, 13/12/92] p.1.

identities in a political vein - as it were to recast the 'imagined community' from above to match the changing subject of the 'daily plebiscite'<sup>166</sup> below. However it seems that a new conception - a broadly politicised Scotland - has emerged much more in keeping with a Melucci-like conception than a traditional nationalist party, summed up well by Kellas:

“With the advent of the SNP, Scottish nationalism takes on a double aspect. On the one hand, there is the electoral history of the SNP, and the demand for political devolution, while on the other, there is the continuing development of Scottish national consciousness in all its forms...a steady growth to the position today in which national consciousness is to be found throughout Scottish society.”<sup>167</sup>

The SNP is a part of this, but not the whole part, and in this sense the politics of modern Scotland and its heterogeneous demand for autonomy fits better into the complex 'post'-national model espoused thus far.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter has argued that the nation-states of Great Britain and Italy have both experienced difficulties in achieving the goal of merging the parameters of the state with the imaginings of the nation. Recent historical writing on both countries reveals the extent to which unitary identities were invented and imposed on the respective populaces. Whilst not suggesting that these nationalist enterprises totally failed, it is argued that they were never as complete and homogeneous as some previous theories of nationalism have argued. Neither Great Britain nor Italy represented the paradigmatic nation-state which some literature on nationalism portrays but which is hard to situate empirically. The evidence is that identities persisted at a sub-national level and that recent developments have seen these come back in a more politicised form. The most convincing explanation of this is that dual or multiple identities have continued to exist and at differing times in their histories the dominant identity can

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<sup>166</sup> E. Renan (1990) op.cit. p.19.

<sup>167</sup> J. G. Kellas (1989) op. cit. p.128.



shift. The task for the rest of this thesis is to ask how and why such shifts occur and the next chapter will look at the part played by political parties in any causal chain.

This chapter has also filled out the discussion of globalisation in Chapter Two with the historical experience of Great Britain and Italy that the constraints facing would-be nations are far greater at the tail end of the twentieth century than they would have been say a century before. This partly stems from the specific context of the European Union within which the politics of both are situated, but also comes from the more general constraints on autonomy which international developments have wrought and the failure of national polities to 'absorb' dissenters as effectively in the age of mass, democratic welfarism. The British Empire and the Italian colonial foray into Africa are very much historical interludes now, as are periods of high protectionism, cultural monism and general national myth-making. The global age has shifted the parameters of nationhood substantially and it is the contention of this thesis that the movements of the late twentieth century are different to the extent that they deserve to have their diversity noted and studied. The following chapters will carry out this examination of the SNP and the Northern League and present evidence in support of the contentions made thus far.

**CHAPTER FOUR -**  
**IDENTITIES RECLAIMED - THE EMERGENCE OF THE SCOTTISH**  
**NATIONAL PARTY AND THE NORTHERN LEAGUE**

**4.1 Situating the Argument**

The argument thus far has been built up on a theoretical level and then placed in the context of the histories of the two 'nation-states' under consideration. The next two chapters will situate the argument further by undertaking an explicit examination of the two parties involved in Scotland and Northern Italy. This chapter will begin this process with a full account of both these parties' histories and the next chapter will then undertake an explicit comparison by looking at the evidence on the sociological make-up and electoral support for both parties. The parties will be analysed in terms of some of the major models of voting behaviour and attempt will be made to assess to what extent, if any, they are different to more traditional parties. The underlying context of these chapters is one of seeking to explain why these parties emerged significantly when they did, of analysing the issues and motives which brought them forward in the political fray and assessing if and how they have then changed since that time.

An attempt will be made to gauge the extent to which each party can be said to be a traditional 'nationalist' movement drawing on some of the analyses already outlined. It will be argued that both the SNP and the Northern League fail to fit into the various categories proffered by the established theories of both voting behaviour and nationalist politics and that instead they need to be conceptualised in new ways, certainly with regard to the content of their nationalism, if not its name.

The Northern League and the Scottish National Party are not identical phenomena - no two autonomist movements are - but they share considerable similarity in their

genesis and motive. Neither can be understood outwith their specific societal setting. However this chapter will contend that there is considerable overlap between the reasons for the emergence of the two parties, and these need to be conceptualised in ways which recognise changes in the causes and conditions of nationalism in the late twentieth century European Union. As the last chapter made clear neither can be properly understood in isolation and part of this chapter's task is to situate both parties in the wider context looking at the attitudes of other parties who are also electoral competitors and societal attitudes to reform and change.

#### **4.2 The Northern League**

The first notable study of the '*leghe*' (the collective Italian name for the various leagues in the north) came with Renato Mannheimer's 1991 study of the *Lega Lombarda*. The general theme of the collection of essays, edited by him, focused on the gestation and growth of the various leagues. Some of the authors have since been accused of searching for solutions which characterised these new movements as unequivocally on the right and probably racist, but the true complexity of the phenomenon was well captured by Mannheimer:

“The '*leghista*' is...a figure too heterogeneous to be described in an unequivocal way. In reality 'one' *leghista* does not exist, there are several such figures, and for each the prevalent characteristics can be elucidated depending on the different grade of commitment to the League.”<sup>168</sup>

This theme of diversity is one picked up by a contributor to the above study, Ilvo Diamanti, who develops his typology of '*leghisti*' (the collective name for League voters) in his 1993 book (updated in 1995). He highlights four markedly different phases in the League's short history which it is useful to summarise as a guide to its electoral pragmatism.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> R. Mannheimer et. al. (1991) op. cit.p.124.

<sup>169</sup> I. Diamanti (1993) op. cit. This time frame comprises Chapters Three - Six of the book. *Leghista* is the Italian term for League activist or partisan.

1983-1987 : The initial breakthrough came with the *Liga Veneta* (the spelling here reflecting the use of Venetian dialect) which gained 4.2% of the region's vote in the 1983 general election. It was a political party which had emerged out of linguistic and cultural revivals in the 1970s and at that time possessed a clearly 'ethnic' orientation believing in an ancient Venetian nation which should be revived as the solution to the Veneto region's contemporary problems. The limited data of the time indicates that the bulk of its votes were gained from disaffected Christian Democrat voters who were concentrated in the areas of the northern industrial periphery. However the explicitly ethnic definition of nationality set up an immediate barrier and the *Liga* slipped back in subsequent elections. It is this phase which most closely resembles a traditional, folkloristic, nationalist movement but this was an emphasis soon to be swamped by the influence of neighbouring Lombardy.

1987-1990 : This second period saw a shift in focus from the Veneto to Lombardy and the growing importance of the *Lega Lombarda* and its leader Umberto Bossi. Under his guidance the focus shifted from an ethnic-based identity to the idea of a community of interests under threat. It was this period which saw the development of the anti-Southern and anti-immigrant strands in the League's rhetoric, but these are now seen as mobilising tools in its anti-centrist effort rather than ends in themselves. It was a message put across in an unorthodox fashion with Bossi moving from the Venetian use of dialect, to a more colloquial Italian of the streets, using slang and swear-words. League activists were to be found in bars and football terraces, taking every opportunity to distance themselves from the traditional parties and their mediums. Thus this period saw significant change in the League's project, summed up by Diamanti :

“From the idea of territory as the source of historical identity, with the region as nation, the Lombard League, and especially its leader Umberto Bossi, substituted the idea of territory as the centre of an identity founded on interests, a community with great traditions and productive capacity,

constrained by its subordination to the logic of the state and the parties.”<sup>170</sup>

1990-1992 : As the crises of the Italian political and economic systems deepened, the League expanded its strength throughout the regions of the North. This was overseen by the creation of the umbrella organisation, the *Lega Nord*, or Northern League, which despite having Bossi as its leader and a very hierarchical power structure was more than just the Lombard League writ large, in that under its auspices came organisations from all the regions of ‘Padania’ or Northern Italy. It was a period which saw a normalisation in the League’s vote and an advance at the expense of all the major traditional parties. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 had a profound effect on the Italian polity weakening the communist subculture and further weakening its opposing Christian Democrat subculture which had used communism as its bogeyman for forty years. The League stepped into the ensuing vacuum with a clever concentration in this period on its opposition to the traditional parties and the organs of the state which in many spheres meant the same thing such was the overlap between the two (the relationship between citizen and state and party and state is dealt with at length by Paul Ginsborg in his comprehensive history of Italy since 1943.<sup>171</sup>)

The League’s reward came with spectacular advances across the North in the 1992 general election. The League consolidated its base in the regions of Lombardy, the Veneto and Piedmont. However it also made significant advances in the so-called special-statute region (with considerable autonomous concessions due to its linguistic make-up) of Friuli Venezia-Giulia and the ‘red’ region of Emilia-Romagna. The results in the different regions are displayed overleaf in Table 4.1:

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid p.57.

<sup>171</sup> P. Ginsborg (1990) “A History of Contemporary Italy - Society & Politics 1943 - 1988” “This deformed relationship between citizen and state, with its emphasis on the individual’s capacity to trigger discretionary action, was a legacy which became an enduring feature of the republican state.” p.149.



**Table 4.1** <sup>172</sup>  
**Regional Distribution of Lega Nord Support**

Regions	1990 (Regional)		1992(General)		1994(General)	
	Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%
Lombardy	1,183,493	21.4	1,497,600	25.1	1,460,844	22.1
Veneto	180,676	5.7	575,814	18.9	701,801	21.6
Piedmont	148,450	5.4	505,055	19.4	484,737	15.7
Emilia-Romagna	85,379	3.0	292,962	10.6	195,192	6.4
Liguria	71,311	5.2	175,973	15.5	140,132	11.4
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	-	-	137,167	15.5	150,272	16.9
Tuscany	20,657	0.7	80,557	2.8	56,476	2.2
Trentino-Alto Adige	-	-	56,527	9.0	47,572	7.5
TOTAL	1,689,966	9.1	3,321,655	16.7	3,237,026	15.2

1992-1994 : In the year which followed the 1992 election Diamanti noted a further substantial shift in the League's political position caused largely by the disintegration of the Italian system around it. The economic crises of the budget deficit and soaring state expenditure were brought into sharp focus by the convergence criteria laid down in the Maastricht treaty for monetary union. In the North this caused anger at the possibility that the South would prevent Italy from entering the European fast-track. Meanwhile the investigations of the Milanese magistrates, led by Antonio Di Pietro, unearthed the trail which led to the '*tangentopoli*' or 'kickback city' scandals which finally confirmed the corruption of all the traditional parties in the use of government funds. Indeed several observers believe it was no coincidence that the judicial breakthroughs against the corruption came in the North not the clientelistic South.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>172</sup> The first two columns are from R. Mannheimer (1993) 'L'elettorato della Lega Nord' p. 255 and the third was calculated from the PR ballot results recorded in M. Corte (ed.) (1995) "*Il Libro dei Fatti*" pp.421-426 - it was impossible to disaggregate the *Polo della liberta* votes in the 75% majority ballot due to stand down candidatures. The percentages shown indicate the percentage of the vote gained in each particular region and those in the total row show the percentage gained across all the regions shown ie. all those in which the League stood except the Valle D'Aosta where the local league runs independently of the Northern League and in 1994 got 54.1% of the vote against 17.1% for the latter. The regions in which the League has an electoral presence are those which have been defined as part of Padania, and are highlighted in Appendix II.

<sup>173</sup> See for example M. Clark (1995) 'Post-Fascist Italy' where he says "The rise of the leagues hugely destabilised an already fragile political situation, but it did more. It provided

The League was thrust to the forefront of the political spectrum and had to rid itself of its oppositional status and present itself as a force for change of the whole political system. It accomplished this task by focusing tirelessly on the need for fundamental institutional and economic reforms, which it saw as best achieved through the three highly-devolved macro-regions proposed by its intellectual mentor, Gianfranco Miglio (who since the March 1994 election has severed his links with Bossi due to his perception that the latter prefers power over principle<sup>174</sup>). For Diamanti this further shift in stance to a party of neo-liberal, territorial renovation presented the League with considerable problems of holding together the consensus it had assembled up to that point to its new leitmotif. However as Table 4.1 above shows the League did hold on to a stable number of voters in the PR part of the March 1994 election, dropping only 84,629 votes to still stand around the three and a quarter million preference vote tally. The League markedly improved in the Veneto and held fairly constant elsewhere despite the significant entry of a new media-powered force for innovation in the shape of Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*. Sensing a direct confrontation between the League and Berlusconi's movement as vehicles for renewal, Bossi chose a path of coalition to prevent the renewal in power of the old men of *pentapartito* power, for in his words: "There had already started a sophisticated and transformist operation to save the centralist system by substituting the faces and the names on the front-line."<sup>175</sup>

However warning against any complacency came in the June 1994 European election when all parties ran on their own in a PR election which saw Berlusconi prove his electoral potential throughout Italy with 30.6% of the vote nation-wide (Italy is

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the political cover for investigating magistrates. Italy's judiciary had been itching for years to probe corruption." p.239.

<sup>174</sup> Indeed much of his quickly published book about his time with the League consisted of a scathing personal attack on Bossi's arrogance and his inability to lead a party in power - see Miglio (1994) op. cit.

<sup>175</sup> U. Bossi (1995) "Tutta la Verita - Perche ho partecipato al governo Berlusconi. Perche l'ho fatto cadere. Dove voglio arrivare" p.3.

divided into five large Euro-constituencies). The League meanwhile suffered its first substantial electoral set-back since its rise to prominence, falling to 6.6% in the relevant Northern seats. Subsequent opinion polls showed Fini's National Alliance as the chief beneficiary of Berlusconi's troubles over *tangentopoli*, *Fininvest* (his holding company) and his showing of pro-government adverts on both state and his own private television. However it should be noted that when the League's vote is expressed as an all-Italian percentage, it loses some of its veracity for the very obvious point that the League is not an all-Italian party. Thus in the same way that the SNP vote can look paltry when expressed as a British percentage, the League vote is dissipated when taken at the Italian level and even when expressed as a percentage of all the regions in which they have a presence it loses impact because of the party's predominant concentration in Lombardy, the Veneto and Piedmont. Table 4.2 below makes the point clear and includes 1996 election figures. Indeed developments since the middle of 1995 can be seen as marking a further chapter in the League's history with the embracing of an explicit secessionist platform which, as can be seen from Table 4.2 below, has reaped considerable electoral reward :

**Table 4.2<sup>176</sup>**  
**League Vote Expressed as Percentage of Different Areas**

Area	'92(Gen)	'94(Gen)	'94(Euro) <sup>177</sup>	'96(Gen) <sup>178</sup>
All Italy	8.7%	8.4%	6.6%	10.1%
All Regions in which League has candidates	16.7%	15.2%	12.7%	18.2%
Lombardy, Piedmont and the Veneto	22.2%	20.4%	12.7%	24.7%

<sup>176</sup> Same sources used as those for Table 4.1 above - see Footnote 172.

<sup>177</sup> In the European elections the League had candidates in all five of the macro-constituencies into which Italy is divided but outwith the North-Eastern and North-Western areas these were simply nominal candidacies. In the above table the first row gives the all Italian figure, whilst the second and third row give the amount polled in the two Northern constituencies which unfortunately cannot be broken down any further into regions, since they were only collated at this aggregate macro level.

<sup>178</sup> The 1996 data was calculated from figures published in *Corriere della Sera* [23/4/96].

Thus one can see that the league's vote is generally twice as high as a percentage of all regions in which it runs as compared to an all-Italian figure, and when one concentrates only on its heartlands, this figure rises again. However 1994 undoubtedly represented in electoral terms the toughest year which the League had faced - its previously unchecked rise from election to election was put into reverse by the entry of Berlusconi and the European result was a real blow and did nothing for the cohesion of the newly-formed government. The League regrouped and confounded its critics by bouncing back with 1996 representing its best electoral performance ever.

It soon became clear that the tensions which had riven the coalition throughout the 1994 election<sup>179</sup> had been carried into government - the League had achieved a tactical triumph with its garnering of 75% of coalition candidates in the Northern seats, but it found it very difficult to translate this into governing influence as shown by the distinct lack of any move to decentralisation, despite the League securing the Ministry for Institutional Reform. Such conflict was hardly a surprise given the ideological polarisation that existed between the League and Gianfranco Fini's National Alliance which not only wanted to strengthen the central state, but to expand it by re-negotiating territories such as Istria (part of Slovenia) lost to Italy at the end of the Second World War.

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<sup>179</sup> There was no hiding of the League's antagonism to *Forza Italia* in the election campaign, but their short-term electoral pragmatism was always to the fore, highlighted in the following pronouncement by Bossi distributed at the League's closing election rally in Milan on 25th March 1994: "I decided to construct the 'pole of liberty' a few months ago when there was a complex operation afoot to destroy the League...Forza Italia, a movement born to destroy us, has been transformed into a useful ally. This has entailed some sacrifice, it is true. In some seats Berlusconi has presented men recycled from the old regime, demonstrating what we have known all along, that his political project aims at recycling, not at change. But, on the whole, we have put Berlusconi's movement into a straight-jacket, we have manoeuvred him into an electoral accord which will give him only a minority of deputies and senators.".

The collapse of Berlusconi's government in December 1994 after the League withdrew its support should not be seen as a surprise, the tensions having come to a head after a summer of disputes and reconciliation. Bossi also felt threatened by the encroachment of *Forza Italia* into the League heartlands - at the March 1994 election their geographical profile returned more to that of the industrial periphery rather than the urban centres. The decline in vote-share at the 1994 European elections was followed by a trickling away of opinion poll support, with the League very much on the defensive:

"Bossi, in fact, has to defend the identity and interests of a socio-economic periphery ambushed not only by the capital of the first republic, the Rome of the traditional parties, but also by that of the second : the Milan of Berlusconi."<sup>180</sup>

Thus bringing down the Berlusconi government was a reaction both to the League's frustration at being unable to advance its own agenda due to deadlock with the statist National Alliance, but also due to the worry that it would lose its electoral credibility as a protest movement and be seen increasingly just as a normal party. The fact that Bossi took the vast majority of the party with him at a special conference in 1995 is a testament to his control of the party, for at one stage the future of the movement seemed under threat as around a fifth of the league's parliamentarians defected to more pro-Berlusconi groupings. The subsequent move to the centre and flirtation with the revitalised left under ex-Christian Democrat, Roman Prodi, also represents continuity with the League's entrepreneurial past and finally nails shut the far-right coffin.

1994 ~ It would seem that a fifth period has occurred in the League's history which can be traced from December 1994, in which the League has stood alone and has begun to flirt with the ideas of outright separatism (as outlined in Chapter Two) and

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<sup>180</sup> I. Diamanti (1994) "La Lega Nord - un partito per la periferia" in P. Ginsborg (ed.) "Stato dell'Italia" p.677.



is using much more confrontational tactics such as the recall parliament which has conducted several meetings at Mantua. Diamanti has analysed the headline stability of the League's vote between 1992 and 1994 to reveal a profound redistribution at work. In the 3,611 electoral colleges of the North in which the League had a presence at both elections it remained stable - defined as less than 1% variance between the two elections - in only 31 of them or less than 1% of colleges. The strongest League presence after 1994 was to be found in the Veneto and those areas of Lombardy where the League initially found success - provinces such as Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Sondrio and Bossi's home Varese - in Diamanti's words "the zones in which the League phenomenon had seen its first affirmation."<sup>181</sup> It seems that this return to the Northern periphery in geographical terms has been mirrored by a return in terms of policy to the stance of the late 1980s and earlier 1990s. The League's fingers have been burned in terms of participating in the Roman game, it lost in credibility far more than it gained in tangible reforms and it hastened a return to a much more isolationist stance in which the threat of outright secession has come to be used again as a political axe to unexpected effect. As Bossi has made clear, the League feels there is quite a thin line which is in danger of being crossed:

"For now, we in the League have succeeded in avoiding the anxiety for change degenerating towards armed revolution. But, come the next crisis, what will happen if reform doesn't come in a very short time..."<sup>182</sup>

This consistent unpredictability in the League's stance and position seems to confirm Diamanti's characterisation of the League as a 'political entrepreneur' of the first order, and in a short period of time it has enjoyed considerable success built on this instrumental approach. In the decade and a half since the *Liga Veneta's* first emergence the various leagues have displayed a large capacity for political pragmatism, shaping their message to the prevailing political climate. Vitally in increasing their vote over this period they have attracted different voters for different

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p. 675.

<sup>182</sup> U. Bossi (1995) op. cit. p.205.

reasons without alienating those already voting for it - the curse of the single issue groups which Italy, like many other Western polities, saw emerge in the 1980s. Moreover the League by the very novelty of its presence in the political market and its new methods of communication helped to contribute to the electoral fluidity from which it benefited, for Diamanti :

“The Lega Nord appears..as a political entrepreneur of the crisis, which reflects and at the same time produces the feelings and resentments of wide sectors of the Northern social landscape, thus translating into consensus the many reasons and directions of dissensus distilled through the eighties and nineties.”<sup>183</sup>

#### **4.3 The Scottish National Party**

What of the Scottish National Party? This party has existed far longer than the League dating back to 1934 and it was formed by the amalgamation of other nationalist groupings, which were themselves pre-figured by the Scottish Home Rule Association, set up in 1886. However as a significant political force it has only been a presence since the mid-1960s and it is this period of its history which this thesis will focus on. Its major breakthrough came in 1967 with victory at the Hamilton by-election against Labour expectations of an easy win. The SNP has not experienced the rapid rise to power of the Italian Northern League with its geographically diverse vote being penalised by the UK's first-past-the-post electoral system and its inability to penetrate first Conservative and latterly Labour electoral dominance. However it has now established itself as a major player in the Scottish polity and in the European elections of 1994 and the regional elections of 1995 has quite easily occupied second place behind the Scottish Labour Party. In many ways the SNP defines much of the Scottish political agenda by focusing attention on the best way to govern Scotland<sup>184</sup>, as Mitchell says:

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<sup>183</sup> I. Diamanti (1993) op. cit. p.85.

<sup>184</sup> November 1995 provided adequate example of this with all the major political parties involved in the launch of major new initiatives concerning the governance of Scotland : the Conservatives unveiled proposals for a beefed-up Scottish Grand Committee, which marked

“It has been the SNP’s ability to enter centre stage despite its persistently weak party presence which has been the most notable feature of the party political debate since the 1960s. Its periodic advances have caused the other parties to shift their focus and concentrate attacks on the SNP.”<sup>185</sup>

An analysis of both parties’ sociological and attitudinal make-up will follow in Chapter Five after a brief summary of its history, with a specific focus on the goals of the organisation and any changes in them over time.

Pre - 1934 A Home Rule Bill had passed its second reading in 1914 before the First World War intervened to prevent it receiving passage and so it joined the previous attempts to deliver self-government for Scotland in 1894, 1895, 1908, 1911 and then after the war in 1920 and 1925, all of which were talked out by unionist opponents, both on the left and the right. The collective result of such filibuster, combined with the reaching of an Irish settlement in 1921, was to heighten activism both in the nationalist vein with a re-assertive Scottish Home Rule Association and in the class sphere with the revolutionary undercurrents of Red Clydeside. After the failure of the General Strike in 1926, more energies were channelled into the former. September 1927 saw John MacCormick set up the Scottish Nationalist Association at Glasgow University with the minutes of the first meeting stating the object to be: “To foster and maintain Scottish Nationalism by (i) securing self-government for Scotland and (ii) advancing the ideals of Scottish culture within and without the University”<sup>186</sup>

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a considerable retreat from their ‘status quo’ entrenchment since the ‘Taking Stock’ exercise after the last general election; the SNP launched a policy document called ‘Citizens not Subjects’ which brought together much of their previous policy strands regarding an independent Scotland as a full member state of the European Union, whilst introducing the new idea that Scotland would remain part of an ‘Association of States of the British Isles’; The Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats used St. Andrew’s Day to launch their document ‘Scotland’s Parliament, Scotland’s Right’ the result of six years consultation in the Scottish Constitutional Convention and which details plans for a devolved parliament with tax-raising powers and an electoral agreement which mandates equal male and female representation - see *‘The Herald’* [1/12/95] pp. 8-9.

<sup>185</sup> J. Mitchell (1992) ‘The 1992 Election in Scotland in Context’ p. 619.

<sup>186</sup> A. Marr (1992) op. cit. p.64.

Of immediate note is the use of 'self-government' rather than independence and the cultural emphasis of the organisation. MacCormick's association was quickly followed in 1928 by the National Party of Scotland set up at a rally at Bannockburn and fusing small nationalist groupings into a party which was agreed on the need for self-government and its opposition to socialism but little else, though by these two stances it alienated virtually all of its potential vote which was either unionist or socialist:

"Even now the SNP attracts a kind of floating, in-between political class... millions of Scots were born into Labour-voting traditions, and the SNP has had to struggle not to seem alien to them...The gap between Labour socialists and SNP socialists remains a deep and jagged fissure in Scottish politics. This is often explained as the fall-out from the devolution years of the 1970s. But it goes right back to the origins of the Nationalist Party in the 1920s."<sup>187</sup>

1934 - 1961 The two parties were merged in 1934 to form the Scottish National Party as we know it today but the heterogeneous nature of the organisation created much internal tension, for example between the cantankerous Hugh MacDiarmid who believed only in ideological nationalism and the more pragmatic MacCormick who struck a deal with the Liberals so that they would stand down in twelve seats. In these early years one can see the seeds of debates which have continued throughout the history of the SNP and which mirror those of other autonomy parties such as the League - namely how best to achieve the stated objective whilst avoiding assimilation to the central system that is the goal of change. In its early years the SNP believed that the force of its aim was sufficient, as Richard Finlay states:

"The newly created Scottish National Party encompassed elements from all shades of political opinion and it was believed that the existence of such a body vindicated the idea that Home Rule could act as a cohesive force, relying simply on its own momentum to achieve constitutional change."<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid. pp.69-70.

<sup>188</sup> R. Finlay (1994) "Independent and Free : Scottish Politics and the Origins of the Scottish National Party 1918 - 1945" p. 252.

However the decade of the National Government and a looming world war was not a good one to choose to launch a new political doctrine and the marginal nature of the SNP in these years is shown by its 1.1% of the Scottish vote in the 1935 election.<sup>189</sup> The party did gain some success by its refusal to sign the war truce which saw it gain 7,300 votes in Argyll in 1940 and then win its first parliamentary representation through victory in a by-election in Motherwell in 1945 when Robert McIntyre flouted the war-time pact. The seat was resoundingly lost in the general election later that year and the war did not serve the party well. A large rift was created at the 1942 conference, nominally over conscription but really on the question of whether the nationalists should be fighting all other parties for independence or should work with others to maximise enthusiasm for Home-Rule - put simply, fundamentalism versus gradualism. The radicals had come to dominate the outlook of the party and for Finlay it was their key three points which provided the key philosophy of the party, viz.: the definition of self-government as sovereignty equal in status to that enjoyed by the Dominion nations in the British Empire; the use of the electoral system to achieve this political objective and forbidding members from having membership in any other political party. These tenets have remained at the core of the SNP's radical or fundamentalist wing until the present day, as Finlay makes clear:

“In 1942 the radicals took control of the party and established a political character which would last up until the present day. MacCormick's experiment with moderation and latterly with cross-party co-operation had proved to be a failure...they (the radicals) were determined that principle, not expediency, would be their guiding light come what may.”<sup>190</sup>

The fundamentalist SNP fared no better than MacCormick's more pragmatic party (he left in disgust after his ousting and joined the Liberal Party and then in 1947 set up the Scottish Covenant to try and win Home-Rule but two million signatures were rejected by the Labour government of Attlee). The Butskellite consensualism of the

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<sup>189</sup> Although in the eight seats contested the party averaged a respectable 16% see C. Harvie (1994) *Scotland & Nationalism : Scottish Society and Politics 1707 - 1994* p. 28.

<sup>190</sup> R. Finlay (1994) *op. cit* p.253.



1940s and 1950s (a vital element in the maintenance of a sense of British nationalism after a war fought on the home front with the promise of building a New Jerusalem) was as harsh an environment as the pre-war decade particularly as Scotland did well out of the quasi-corporatist British state in which the Scottish Office became a strong player in the national game. In fact for Lindsay Paterson the foundation of the welfare state buoyed unionist sentiment by allowing considerable Scottish autonomy in the fields of education, housing and to a lesser extent in health and social work and providing adequate resources, thus:

“The Scottish Office led the way in promoting this notion of a Scottish national economic interest, no matter that it was part of the UK government and therefore nominally subordinate to the British national interest ...Furthermore, this Scottish nationalism was furthered by being embedded in Britishness : if Scottish politicians could be seen to be enthusiastically backing British interests, then they might be listened to in London when they went on to argue for redistribution in favour of Scotland within Britain.”<sup>191</sup>

Partisan Scottish nationalism then had little to feed on in these years and the frustration showed in resorting to acts such as the stealing of the Stone of Destiny or the blowing up of Royal Mail post-boxes (with the claim that the ER II with which they were embossed after the coronation in 1953 had no legitimacy in Scotland for whom Elizabeth was the first monarch to bear that name). According to Marr, in the two post-war decades, it was ‘more of a sect than a party’<sup>192</sup> However the seeds of growth in the next decades had already been sown in these years, just as much of the structure and the positioning of the SNP can be traced back to its early years.

1961-1974 Why then did the SNP emerge as a significant political force in the 1960s but not before? To understand this, it is necessary to develop a clear picture of the Scottish political system and this is best done by thinking of all the political parties as two-way hinges. A Scottish party must both speak for Scotland at the centre and interpret British issues into a Scottish context - those which do this best reap the

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<sup>191</sup> L. Paterson (1994) op. cit. p.118.

<sup>192</sup> A. Marr (1992) op. cit. p.95.

largest political reward. Thus the Conservatives were the dominant party in the immediate post-war years because they combined their unionist and Protestant, 'Orange' appeal with an overt acceptance of welfarism and a consequently large role for the Scottish Office. Their party's move to the economic right and the consequent hawkishness on the welfare state combined with the ongoing secularisation of Scottish society served to decrease their hegemony. Their position came to be filled by a Labour Party which has moved away from its traditional statist unionism to a now fully-fledged devolutionist stance.<sup>193</sup> However much of this Labour change can be attributed to the presence of the SNP as a serious electoral alternative and so one is back to the question of why the party achieved this position in the Scottish polity. In some ways it is easier to understand the contemporary SNP as a pressure group than as a fully-fledged political party : it exerts pressure on the Labour Party to campaign for devolution by outflanking it and pushing for full-scale independence. Paradoxically this role as a pressure group can only be performed properly by a political party, for:

"Its own history suggests strongly that becoming a movement rather than a party is very unlikely to bring about independence, and its fear of the devolutionist, home-rule option has deep historical roots."<sup>194</sup>

The situation for the SNP is further complicated because it cannot operate in the classic two-way fashion described above, since part of its *raison d'être* is to sever political links with the British state. It is thus caught in a very complicated political matrix with little of the fluidity which characterises the Italian situation described earlier in this chapter, although the experience of the Northern League in government has marked similarities to the difficulties the SNP faces in 'playing the Westminster game'. How has this varied over the last three decades?

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<sup>193</sup> Tony Blair has promised a Scottish parliament within the first year of a British Labour government - a promise criticised by several commentators as wholly unrealistic, given the complexity which such legislation would necessarily entail - see I MacWhirter op. cit. pp.21-23.

<sup>194</sup> D. McCrone (1994d) 'Review : A Tale of Two Histories' p.107.

The nationalist pick-up can be traced from the early 1960s with 19% in the Glasgow Bridgeton by-election in 1961 and Billy Wolfe's second to Tam Dalyell with 23% in the West Lothian by-election the following year<sup>195</sup>. Under the 'Put Scotland First' banner the party passed from being a small cabal to being a much more truly national force, from 20 branches and 2,000 members in 1960, to 484 branches and 120,000 members by 1968. This membership explosion coincided with the growing disillusion with the corporatist British state as the Scottish Office gravy train began to run drier as Britain's relative economic decline of the post-war years was laid more bare. The timing of the Hamilton by-election in 1967 - the year of the Wilson government's humiliating devaluation - could not have been worse for the Labour Party. Disillusion with Wilson translated into a protest vote for the SNP aided by its new organisation and much tactical voting from the Conservatives in the constituency. The 46% of the vote which saw Winnie Ewing elected created a media sensation which the SNP rode to become the largest party in the May 1968 local elections in Scotland with 34%. More importantly the SNP achieved an unprecedented effect on the two major parties - both quickly addressed Home Rule as an attempt to provide a sop to the disillusioned voters who had embraced the SNP as a potential solution, as Marr says:

"The successes of 1967-68 were early skirmishes between the SNP and the big Unionist parties...their real significance was seen inside the Conservative and Labour leadership, where the unexpectedness of the Nationalist challenge produced panic...Intellectually the first puff from the Nationalist wolf had set the Unionist house rocking."<sup>196</sup>

In this scenario the discovery of oil in October 1970 when BP struck in what would become the Forties field can be seen to be very important in its timing. The initial flurry of activity in which Edward Heath had taken the Scottish Conservative

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<sup>195</sup> S. Kendrick (1983) "Social Change and Nationalism in Modern Scotland" p. 299 "It was only after these two pleasant surprises that the SNP decided to go for a full scale electoral strategy." Ian McDonald, the defeated Bridgeton candidate, sold his farm and became the first national organiser in the history of the SNP.

<sup>196</sup> A. Marr (1992) op. cit. pp.119-120.

conference by surprise in May 1968 had fizzled out once the Conservatives were entrenched in office and the SNP were back down to 11.4% in the 1970 general election.<sup>197</sup> The BP oil strike, followed quickly by ones at Brent and Ninian, opened up a whole new line of campaigning. Previously the SNP had often been criticised on the economic viability of their project but, after the OPEC price hikes of 1973 made North Sea production viable, the discovery of oil provided economic manna. Using the famous slogan 'It's Scotland's Oil' the SNP could now promise not only an undefined political freedom to be derived away from Westminster's yoke but more important to most voters, it could present a coherent case for possible economic prosperity. However it is worth noting that the SNP was an established party from the late 1960s - before the North Sea's potential was fully recognised. Like the Northern League, the SNP cannot be satisfactorily explained by a single issue or cleavage, instead it is a complex response to complex conditions, involving many different levels and motives.

1974-1979 Like the Conservatives, the ruling Labour Party now moved toward Home Rule adopting the recommendation of a 100-seat, PR-elected Scottish Senate made by the long-delayed Kilbrandon Royal Commission which reported in October 1973, two years later than planned. Their conversion was a slow and arduous process however and included a remarkable turn-around in the summer of 1974. In their February manifesto Labour went no further than suggesting meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh. Labour won the election, albeit very narrowly, and then did well in the May 1974 elections to the new local authorities. The government Green Paper was published in June and offered several options but hinted at executive rather than legislative devolution, then on June 28th Labour's Scottish executive met and rejected all schemes with the conclusion that "Constitutional

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<sup>197</sup> Winnie Ewing lost her Hamilton seat gained in the by-election but the SNP did win their first general election seat as a consolation with Donald Stewart victorious in the Western Isles and the party's vote was more than double that obtained in 1966.



tinkering does not make a meaningful contribution towards achieving socialist objectives.”<sup>198</sup> The National Executive in London stepped in at this point sensing how large the SNP threat could be and commanded the annual Scottish conference to be re-convened in August. At this conference, union bloc votes ensured that an elective legislative assembly became policy as well as sowing the seeds of conference division which would grow into the Scottish Labour Party.<sup>199</sup> Thus unlike the Conservatives the Labour Party in government found itself in a far tighter position with a majority of only four even after the second election of October 1974. Between the first February election and this second in October, the SNP increased its representation from six to eleven seats and with 30.4% of the vote and could no longer be ignored by the London government. Thus the road to the referendum at the decade’s end had been determined by the political and economic developments at its beginning. The very rapid rise of the SNP over these few years is captured in Table 4.3 overleaf:

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<sup>198</sup> As quoted in C. Harvie (1994) op. cit. p. 189.

<sup>199</sup> This was a short-lived breakaway from the British party founded by Jim Sillars in January 1976, and should not to be confused with the official Labour Party in Scotland. In the words of H. M. Drucker “The breakaway Scottish Labour Party set Scottish politics alight when it was founded in January 1976 by a group of Labour politicians and sympathetic journalists. It was an immediate success with the Scottish press, gained nearly nine hundred members in less than a year, performed creditably in local government by-elections, and threatened to alter the face of British politics.” (quote from back cover). However the party stumbled after infiltration by two Trotskyite groups and failed to fulfil its early promise. For a full account of it - see H. M. Drucker (1978) “Breakaway : The Scottish Labour Party”.



**Table 4.3**  
**Scottish National Party vote-share in general elections<sup>200</sup>**

Year	Total Vote Share(%)	Seats Fought	Vote Share in Seats Fought (%)	Seats Won
1929	0.2	2	5.0	-
1931	1.0	5	13.0	-
1935	1.1	8	16.0	-
1945	1.2	8	7.6	-
1950	0.4	3	7.4	-
1951	0.3	2	12.2	-
1955	0.5	2	14.5	-
1959	0.5	5	11.4	-
1964	2.4	15	10.7	-
1966	5.0	23	14.1	-
1970	11.4	65	12.2	1
1974 Feb.	21.9	70	22.1	6
1974 Oct.	30.4	71	30.4	11
1979	17.3	71	17.3	2
1983	11.7	72	11.7	2
1987	14.0	71	14.2	3
1992	21.5	72	21.5	3

It is clear that with eleven seats in a parliament where the government possessed only a very small majority, which had disappeared entirely by 1976, that the SNP could exert considerable influence and there is no dispute that the presence of the Scottish Nationalist members kept the Labour government committed to a devolution bill which caused considerable internal rifts within the party of government. The process was a long and tortuous one which caused splits both in the Labour Party and the SNP. The first Bill had 350 amendments tabled when it went into committee stage to immobilise it and a guillotine motion in February 1977 to press it through was lost by 29 votes. However nationalist gains in the May local elections of that year upped the electoral pressure on the Labour administration and they pressed ahead. In the procedural maelstrom which ensued, the Labour back-bench MP George Cunningham gained the vital concessionary clause allowing repeal if less than 40% of the electorate backed the constitutional change<sup>201</sup>. Thus the vote on 1st March

<sup>200</sup> Figures taken from R.Parry (1988) "Scottish Political Facts" pp.2-3 and McCrone (1992) op.cit. pp.148-149.

<sup>201</sup> The Cunningham amendment of January 25th 1978 stated that "if it appears to the Secretary of State that less than 40% of the persons entitled to vote in the referendum have

1979 approved a devolved Scottish parliament by 1.23 million votes for to 1.15 million against, and whilst of those who voted this represented 51.6% in favour and 48.4% against, this only translated into 32.9 % of the electorate in favour, with 30.8% against whilst 36.3% did not vote.<sup>202</sup> Thus the referendum result meant the Act was not legally binding. The SNP were outraged by what was seen as a denial of democracy and brought a vote of no confidence against the Callaghan government, though it had called for all-party consultations instead of setting a date for the vote on the order to repeal Scotland Act. Six days later on March 28th the Conservatives brought another vote of no confidence. This vote was lost by Labour and at the resultant general election the Conservatives acceded to government under the UK's first ever woman Prime Minister. The Commons then passed a repeal order of the Act in June 1979 by 301 votes to 206 against and the challenge to Westminster had passed.

1979-1987 In this 1979 election it was the SNP which paid the penalty of devolution's failure, for whilst the Conservatives surged from 24.7% to 31.4%, Labour also increased their vote from October 1974's 36.3% to 41.5%, but the SNP fell from its 30.4% zenith to 17.3%. The effect in terms of seats was particularly devastating with only two members returning to Westminster where before there had been eleven. It is no surprise that the party reacted to this defeat with a prolonged period of in-fighting which centred around the gradualist versus fundamentalist split. For the latter the debacle of the 1970s was definitive evidence that the tactic of gradualism bore no fruit, for it was the SNP which bore the electoral brunt of the

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voted 'Yes' ...he shall lay before Parliament the draft of an Order in Council for the repeal of this Act" It was carried by 168 votes to 142 and a Denis Canavan amendment to remove the '40% rule' was defeated in February by 298 to 248 - from "Scottish Government Yearbook 1979" Reference Section [Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland, Edinburgh University, 1980] p.207.

<sup>202</sup> The question posed in the referendum was "Do you want the provisions of the Scotland Act 1978 to be put into effect?" - from "Scottish Government Yearbook 1980" Reference Section [Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland, Edinburgh University, 1981] p.231.

blame for the referendum's failure, exposing some of the 30% of 1974 as a transitory protest vote. Instead they argued that the party should concentrate on building up a more solid base of support committed to the goal of full Scottish independence. On the other side were those who saw much encouragement from a majority of those who voted in 1979 endorsing change and who thought it better to court further incremental improvements in the SNP's position. The argument came to a head in 1982 with the expulsion of the leftist 79 Group including future leader Alex Salmond. Ironically the party then slowly rehabilitated itself as a left-of-centre movement. It lost further ground in the 1983 general election, falling to 11.7% and 2 seats, but this was largely a function of the SDP/Liberal Alliance coming from nowhere to capture 24.5% of the Scottish vote as a British vehicle for protest against two-party hegemony.

1987 ~ Since the mid 1980s the SNP has been on a steady upward spiral, capturing 14% and 3 seats in 1987 and then surging to 21.5% in 1992 though this brought no added reward in terms of parliamentary representation due to the even geographical distribution of its vote in a majoritarian system which rewards territorial concentration. For a time in the late 1980s and early 1990s there was a tangible belief that constitutional change was going to happen, be it through the devolutionary path of the Constitutional Convention<sup>203</sup> or the 'Independence in Europe' coined by Jim Sillars, a convert to the SNP, who had won Govan at a by-election in November 1988 and so re-ignited hopes of an SNP bandwagon. However the Conservative victory in April 1992 put paid to such hopes. The SNP has had a good electoral record in the 1990s, and as Table 4.4 overleaf shows has established itself as Scotland's second largest party in the various elections of the last few years,

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<sup>203</sup> The SNP refused to participate in this organisation which comprised a cross-section of Scottish life on the grounds that its mandate was too limited and unclear.

although traditionally second order elections have a lower turn-out and a higher protest element:

**Table 4.4**  
**Elections in Scotland 1990-1995(%)<sup>204</sup>**

	May 1990 Regional	Apr 1992 General	May 1994 Regional	June 1994 European	April 1995 Local Gov.
Labour	42.7	39.0	41.8	42.5	43.6
SNP	21.8	21.5	26.8	32.6	26.1
Conservative	19.5	25.6	13.7	14.5	11.5
Liberal Democrat	8.6	13.1	12.0	7.2	9.8
Other	7.4	0.8	5.7	3.2	9.0

Thus with the important exception of the general election the SNP has run Labour second in every second-order election in Scotland in the 1990s. The 32.6% gained in the 1994 European election represented the party's highest ever level, surpassing the 30.4% of October 1974 and bringing a second MEP, Allan Macartney in North-East Scotland to add to the Highlands and Islands Euro-constituency member, Winnie Ewing, which the party has held since direct elections began in 1979. The SNP is now supported by 1 in every 4 Scots, and since 1992 has represented the major electoral rival to the dominant Labour Party in Scotland.<sup>205</sup> The party's clear positioning of itself on the left of the spectrum seems to have brought tangible electoral reward. However the SNP's support remains very geographically spread and they have failed to displace Labour in its Central Belt heartlands. Yet the question remains as to why this situation has not been translated into tangible constitutional change. The next chapter will attempt to answer these questions by looking at the make-up of the SNP support and the structural barriers which it faces in a Labour-dominated system.

<sup>204</sup> The 1990 & 1994 regional figures are from D. Denver & H. Bochel (1994) *The Last Act : The Regional Elections of 1994* p.74 ; 1992 general election and 1994 European election figures are from D. Denver (1994) *'The 1994 European Elections in Scotland'* p.66; the 1995 shadow election figures are from *'The Scotsman'* 8/4/95, Election pull-out.

<sup>205</sup> This title must be distinguished from the short-lived Scottish Labour Party which was described in Footnote 199. The Labour Party in Scotland was adopted as the official title at the 1994 Scottish conference and has been used increasingly as a signal of difference for those disaffected with the centralist leadership of Blair.

#### **4.4 Summary**

This chapter has sought to provide much of the building blocks for the analysis to be undertaken by narrating the histories of the two parties under specific consideration. Several similarities are apparent from this narration, both in political approach and in the constraints faced. Both parties have been electoral chameleons - the early version of the SNP had a devolved settlement as its goal and throughout its subsequent history there has been ebb and flow across the gradualist/fundamentalist divide. Likewise the League's stance on constitutional matters has shifted almost constantly with independence and three strong macro-regions setting the parameters of the debate. Both parties have performed best when opposing the central government, or to put it another way, both have found it hard to play the political game which participation in the centre often demands - the SNP stuttered between 1976 and 1979 when its Westminster representation gave it real power, just as the League was unprepared for its turbulent nine months in office in 1994. This would be a more understandable failing in terms of it being difficult to function effectively within institutions which one wishes to fundamentally reform, were it not for the success within similar constraints of movements in Catalonia and, to a lesser extent, Quebec. This chapter has shown that despite their different time-scales, similarities can be drawn in the histories of the parties and their role as symptoms of the collapse of hegemonic states; the next chapter will seek to extend this comparability to the crucial realm of the voters.



**CHAPTER FIVE -**  
**BELIEVERS OR PROTESTERS?**  
**AN ANALYSIS OF THE PARTIES' VOTERS**

**5.1 Introduction**

The last chapter looked at the histories of both the Northern League and the Scottish National Party. Neither of these parties would possess such important stories had they not managed to attract significant numbers of voters to their message. This may sound a bland assertion of the obvious but the historical work of Miroslav Hroch illustrates that nineteenth-century Europe - the apex of traditional nation-state building - is littered with potential nationalist movements which failed to find political voice for their cultural, linguistic, religious or economic stimuli.<sup>206</sup> Thus the fact that both the parties under consideration have been able to garner and keep at least some voters' electoral endorsement in the twentieth century context of mass enfranchisement is significant and has allowed them to become influential political players, rather than utopian no-hopers. Admittedly, neither has yet achieved their stated goal, but much can be learned about the nature of contemporary autonomism from an analysis of who votes for the League and the SNP.

Specifically this chapter will gauge factors such as age, gender, social class, loyalty to the party and previous political affiliation. It will attempt to compare both parties

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<sup>206</sup> For Hroch, to move from potential to fulfilled nationhood there had to be an active bourgeoisie, in the sense of an elite group prepared to lead a movement for national revival. He goes on to propose three different phases in the creation of nations : Phase A was a period of scholarly interest in which intellectuals undertook a cultural revival of language, history and customs; Phase B was a period of patriotic agitation which in Hroch's words represented "the fermentation process of national consciousness" (p.23) and in which the revival of Phase A was carried to the masses, and if successful was followed by Phase C which was the period of the rise of a mass national movement. The central part of Hroch's schema then is Phase B since whether or not it was successful determined achievement of nationhood - Hroch saw many potential nations as stuck in Phase B, in other words still striving to convince the masses - see M. Hroch (1985) "Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe".

by explicitly examining these variables. Use will be made of various voting models, such as the protest vote model, the relative deprivation model, the identity model and finally the new social movements model. All of this analysis will take place whilst asking the question of whether the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League are different both from previous autonomist movements and other political parties. The argument will be set in the context of the debate on changing values and political orientations in western societies like Britain and Italy, which may help explain the emergence of new parties. It is the interplay of economic, cultural and political factors which determines the success of a given political party at a given time and this chapter will ask how much any or all of these factors can be said to have changed to the advantage of autonomist parties over the last few decades.

## **5.2 Changing Values?**

Ronald Inglehart inspired a large debate in the whole question of value changes and the potential explanations of them with his 1977 book "The Silent Revolution" which contained the assertion that :

"The values of Western publics have been shifting from an overwhelming emphasis on material well-being and physical security toward greater emphasis on the quality of life...Today, an unprecedentedly large portion of Western populations have been raised under conditions of exceptional economic security. Economic and physical security continue to be valued positively, but their relative priority is lower than in the past."<sup>207</sup>

On such an interpretation voters can afford to move away from traditional parties whose main ideological cleavage has revolved around the question of how best to maximise economic wealth; relative affluence allows the luxury of pursuing other non-material ends with one's vote, freed from previous class-based constraints. Such an emergence from Hobbes' state of nature, with physical security at a historical high, and the surpassing of Locke's materialism, with unprecedented numbers in society having stable property and sufficient wealth, is concentrated in the affluent

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<sup>207</sup> R. Inglehart (1977) op. cit. p. 3.

regions of the globe, namely Western Europe and North America. Inglehart argued that it is precisely these areas which have seen the emergence of new parties and the concurrent weakening of older mass and catch-all parties, based on material and religious cleavages, over the last couple of decades. However, one must be wary of treating this material satiation as a one-off step; it is rather part of an on-going economic process which has seen much change in the late 1980s and early 1990s with increased job insecurity and a move toward part-time or casual work. The micro picture, then, is constantly changing, but it seems fair at the macro level to posit a large shift in average material circumstances since the Second World War, both in Great Britain and more spectacularly in Italy, notwithstanding the UK's well-documented relative economic decline during this period.<sup>208</sup>

Examples of the new political entrants can be found in the form of the Green parties in various West European states, especially in Germany, the women's parties which have come to the fore in Scandinavia and, less clear-cut in orientation, the autonomist parties in Quebec, Catalonia, Belgium and the two areas under consideration in this thesis, Scotland and Northern Italy. In Inglehart's words:

"The political and economic systems continue to produce outputs that respond relatively well to traditional demands, but they do not seem to provide adequate satisfaction for other needs and demands that are increasingly important among certain segments of the population. Changing values combine with a growing sense of the inadequacy of existing institutions to encourage the use of new and different political inputs, including protest activity and the formation of new political movements and organisations."<sup>209</sup>

Reference can also be made to the burgeoning numbers of non-partisan, single-issue movements, such as the nuclear disarmament, women's, pensioners' and various environmental movements which shun the traditional route of the ballot box and undertake direct action. This route can be very effective across national borders,

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<sup>208</sup> Indeed a significant post-war economic event came in Italy when its GDP per capita overtook that of Britain in the 1980s - '*Il Sorpasso*' ('The Overtaking') as it was known was much disputed by the British government but was nonetheless significant as an indication of relative economic trends.

<sup>209</sup> R. Inglehart (1977) op. cit. pp.14-15.

as Greenpeace's campaign against Shell's plans to dispose of the Brent Spar oil installation at sea showed in 1995. It is of note that the membership figures of many of these non-parliamentary groups have been growing as those of all British political parties have been falling.<sup>210</sup> The question here is to what extent autonomist parties can be said to belong to such changes.

Inglehart's theory has attracted much criticism, most of which argues that his conclusions are too sweeping and can too often be challenged by empirical evidence. Thomas Trump focused on Inglehart's assertion that levels of economic and physical security were the primary determinants of the values shaping political attitudes and that, with growing levels of both types of security, these values have moved from mainly selfish material concerns to more selfless post-materialist ones.<sup>211</sup> He was concerned about the emphasis placed on the change in 'values' and seeks to test the theoretical base of this process using data collected in the United States and Germany in 1984 amongst 'preadults'. This age cohort was chosen because of the particular importance which Inglehart placed on the environmental conditions during one's formative years, which he used as an important factor in explaining his posited generational shift in values between those who grew up in the war-time or interwar years of the first half of the twentieth century and those whose formative period came in the post-war 'long boom' in its second half.<sup>212</sup> This 'environmental' tack

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<sup>210</sup> See Andrew Marr (1995) "Ruling Britannia - The Failure and Future of British Democracy" pp.40-42 Marr estimates that the Conservative Party has fallen from 2.8 million members in 1952 to less than 750,000 now, whilst non-unionised Labour members declined from over a million under Attlee in 1950 to less than 250,000 in the early 90's, though Tony Blair's arrival as party leader has seen this figure increase to more than 330,000. The Liberal Democrats have around 100,000 members, the SNP comes next with around 20,000, Plaid Cymru has around 9,000 and the Greens around 5,000.

<sup>211</sup> T. Trump (1991) 'Value Formation and Postmaterialism- Inglehart's Theory of Value Change Reconsidered' pp.365-390.

<sup>212</sup> See R. Inglehart (1990) "Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society" p.423  
"...throughout advanced industrial society, younger birth cohorts are much likelier to have Postmaterialist values than their elders. A massive body of survey evidence demonstrates that these cohort differences persisted throughout the period from 1970-1988; consequently, intergenerational population replacement during this period led to a gradual decline in the

was extended by Inglehart to include the relative affluence of the region and locality in which individuals live, with those areas enjoying prosperity supposed to be more post-material in their value formation - hence the selection by Trump of West Germany and the USA as two of the most successful post-war economies with widespread levels of material comfort.

Trump's research questions the universality of Inglehart's theory - he finds the German data provides at least qualified support for it, but the American results cast doubt on the hypothesis, such that:

“The finding that economic conditions are not strongly related to either the need hierarchy or values has clear and substantial implications for Inglehart's theory of value change...because material well-being based on economic conditions has been the primary theoretical explanation for the rise of post-materialist values. This evidence strongly suggests that continuing or increasing affluence is not sufficient to bring about a post-materialist future.”<sup>213</sup>

Trump's evidence then would tend to suggest that the link between economic well-being and post-materialism is by no means clear cut and he concludes by calling for more analysis of any nexus observing that “Materialist and post-materialist orientations may not be fundamental *values*, but rather may be more transient social and political *attitudes*”.<sup>214</sup> It seems clear then that materialism has not withered away and any change in values is, at best, partial and incomplete. In looking at autonomist parties, this chapter will argue that material concerns figure highly amongst the party supporters.

The tendency to use Inglehart's theory as a broad explanatory tool - a kind of post-material panacea - by political commentators without adequately testing its provisions is also highlighted by Joseph Janssen in an article focusing on support for

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proportion of Materialists and an increase in the proportion of Postmaterialists among Western publics.”.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. p.382.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. p.383.



the supranational project of European integration.<sup>215</sup> He highlights the way the conclusions of “The Silent Revolution” are used as ‘the’ explanation of Europe without, again, any extensive empirical test. Thus Inglehart and others following him have argued that European integration fits better with the values of post-materialists than with those of materialists, firstly because they are more cosmopolitan and intellectual in attitude than selfish materialists, and secondly because their need to belong can no longer be adequately be met by predominantly materialist nation-states. Janssen paraphrases Inglehart thus: “Their need for belonging and their contempt for the nation-state drives post-materialists to a preoccupation with the sub- or supra- national levels of government.”<sup>216</sup> Janssen tries to fill in some of the missing empirical colour by examining data on attitudes to Europe from France, West Germany, Italy and Great Britain between 1973 and 1988. In this he finds no significant difference between attitudes toward integration expressed by the pre-war and post-war generations, nor is there is a discernible shift in favour of the EU as generational replacement occurs. Janssen is not totally critical, accepting that nation-states have become less materialist in the years since “The Silent Revolution” was published, for instance in adopting at least limited environment friendly policies such as the banning of CFCs, and he concludes that :

“..it is necessary for political scientists who use Inglehart’s value distinction in studying the formation of attitudes to consider whether a possible relationship between values and the attitude being studied is not bound to time and place i.e.. country. This could enhance our understanding of political changes and also leave us with the hard core of the consequences of the changes described by Inglehart.”<sup>217</sup>

This sentiment is one which seems the right way to approach the whole question of value change and political development. One must be as thorough in the treatment of relatively new theories as one would be when dealing with those which are more

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<sup>215</sup> J. I. H. Janssen (1991) ‘Postmaterialism, Cognitive Mobilisation and Public Support for European Integration’ pp.443-468.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. p.445 and see Inglehart (1977) op. cit. Ch.12 ‘Parochialism, Nationalism, and Supra-nationalism’ pp.322-362.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. p. 468.

well-established, such as those dealing with nation-building. There is no panacea which can explain all the political and social changes which developed democracies have witnessed over recent decades. This is where post-materialism has over-reached itself, and is precisely why any theory put forward here concerning 'post'-nationalism will at best be guarded and subject to much further research. Rather than seeking simplistic explanations, one must try to explain a complex interaction of factors and stimuli, whilst simultaneously informing any comparative discussion with the context of time and place as Janssen suggests and as Chapters Three and Four have already undertaken.

It is the contention of this thesis that the SNP and the Northern League are symptoms of at least some of these changes. Both parties have been analysed within the post-materialist schema with mixed conclusions. In the Scottish context Saul Newman investigated the rise and decline of the SNP<sup>218</sup> and concluded that although Inglehart's theory might explain the rise of the SNP, it struggled to explain the consequent decline of the party from the late 1970s since a value shift was supposed to be a once-and-for-all move, not a short-term mood swing. However, Newman, writing in the early 1990s did not have the SNP's steady rise to second place in the Scottish polls and elections to digest and perhaps the decline can be somewhat explained by bringing in Janssen's proviso of time and place with the referendum and its recriminations hitting the SNP hard in the first half of the 1980s. As for the League Carlo Lottieri has argued that its *à la carte* programme held together by the thread of autonomy attracts voters from across the political spectrum in a post-modern and post-materialist fashion.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> S.Newman (1992) 'The Rise and Decline of the SNP : Ethnic Politics in a Post-Industrial World' pp.1-35.

<sup>219</sup> C. Lottieri (1995) 'La Lega Nord Al Bivio' p.6 "The territorial unit of reference of young adherents of the League from the early 1990s appeared far closer to administrative frontiers than historic and cultural realities. The passion for 'place' appeared to belong rather to the symbolic imagination than to direct experience of a place actually known."

The question which this chapter will aim to answer is to what extent these two parties can be said to be symptoms of value change. Both parties will be assessed in turn within various voting models outlined and it will be asked whether they are transitory protest vehicles or can be seen to represent more permanent, new cleavages with voters who are believers not protesters. The chapter will conclude with an appraisal of its role in understanding autonomy movements in the late twentieth century European Union<sup>220</sup>.

### **5.3 The 'Leghisti'**

Who votes for the Northern League? This simple question has been one of the largest causes of controversy in the Italian literature on the league phenomenon and several competing answers have arisen to the question of where the leagues gained most of their adherents from. The first issue to be investigated is the political orientation of the League electorate. This question more than any other first brought the League to public attention with myriad journalistic and academic attacks on their alleged far right stance and it was tacitly assumed that their voters and sympathisers shared a similar political outlook. The initial analyses<sup>221</sup> identified the League as an anti-immigration, racist party such as the French National Front or German Republican Party, or as a single-issue, potentially post-materialist, protest party such as the

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<sup>220</sup> The question of where the EU fits into the post-materialist schema is a contentious one which will be considered in depth in the penultimate chapter. A. Milward (1993) op. cit. is one of the foremost proponents of the idea that it is an organisation which furthers the material interests of nation-state members, thus p.27 "Rather than see the Single European Act (SEA) as a confirmation of neo-functionalist theories of integration, we see the new treaty as confirmation that the integrationist framework would still be chosen by governments for the advancement of new national policy objectives after the changes of the 70's".

<sup>221</sup> For instance L.Balbo & L.Manconi (1990) "I razzismi possibili", V. Moioli (1990) "I Nuovi Razzismi. Miserie e fortune della Lega Lombarda", or more recently in English E. Vasta's chapter on Italy in J. Solomos & J. Wrench (eds.) (1993) "Racism and Migration in Western Europe" which says "These Leagues seem to attract the same types of voters as the National Front in France" p.92.

Greens, but these seem to have stemmed more from academic supposition than any empirical evidence.

More substantively the League was portrayed in the early 1990s as the beneficiary of the drastic contractions in the vote of the Christian Democrat (DC) Party<sup>222</sup>, which went from 38.3% in 1979 to 29.7% in 1992 and then into oblivion by 1994 as the party was subsumed by corruption investigations and ultimately disbanded to be refounded in the various centrist splinters which lost heavily in the 1994 election. The main source of evidence for this contention came from the Veneto region, a former bedrock of the '*zone bianche*' ('white zones') which were the strongest areas of the Catholic subculture. This is an argument forged by Italian and British commentators alike<sup>223</sup> but it fails to cross the necessary statistical hurdles, with the DC element largest only as a function of its size and pre-eminent electoral position. The DC decline is an important element in explaining the rise of the leagues but is by no means the whole story. Another explanation of the rise of the leagues explains them as protest movements against the established order. This would logically involve the gaining of a large majority of votes from the '*pentapartito*' or five established parties who formed the basis of the various governments over the last decade of the First Republic, namely the Christian Democrats, the Socialists, and the smaller Liberal, Republican and Social Democratic parties.

However the most recent data damages this projection, with no statistically significant movement toward defection from these parties. The most convincing

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<sup>222</sup> See J. Newell (1993) 'The SNP and the Lega Nord : A Lesson for their rivals?' (paper presented at "Local Politics' Workshop at ECPR conference in Leiden) p. 10 ".significant numbers of DC supporters no longer felt compelled to vote for the party as the main bulwark against communism, and instead felt free to express their dissatisfaction with the system of clientelism and corruption that the DC had been involved in by voting for the League.".

<sup>223</sup> See P. Natale (1991) 'The Lombard League and its Territorial Base - an Ecological Analysis' in Mannheimer (1991) op. cit. pp.83-121.

evidence of this contention comes in the analysis of voter movements between the 1987 and 1992 general elections cited by Piergiorgio Corbetta.<sup>224</sup> He uses the data from the 4,659 interviews of the DOXA exit-poll supplemented by the 716 telephone interviews carried out by the Cattaneo Institute in the two days after April 5th 1992, both asking the two simple questions 'How did you vote this time?' and 'How did you vote last time?'. The results obtained are very significant and reproduced in Table 5.1 below:

**Table 5.1**  
**Electoral Movement to the League from 1987 to 1992**

Party	No. of Voters	%	Vote change(%)
Proletarian Democracy(DP)	1	0	+4
Communist (PCI)	65	19	-10
Socialist (PSI)	44	13	-1
Social-Democratic (PSDI)	13	4	-
Republican (PRI)	19	5	+1
Christian Democratic (DC)	89	25	-5
Liberal (PLI)	5	1	+1
Italian Social Movement (MSI)	23	7	-
Radical (Radicali)	12	3	-1
Greens (Verdi)	14	4	-
Autonomists (separate from LN)	13	4	-
Northern League (Lega Nord)	54	15	+8
Total	352	100	

With reservations as to the size of the sample, these results suggest several salient factors. They are a testament to the remarkable growth of the league phenomenon in five years. Only 15% of the League voters surveyed in 1992 had voted that way in 1987. However of the 64 who voted for the League in 1987 only 10 did not do so in 1992, giving 84% voter stability in an election in which the average was only 68% (first indications from the 1996 election place the League's voter loyalty at around 75% providing evidence for loyalty over a longer term). Most importantly the table shows the diversity of parties from which the Northern League garnered its votes,

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<sup>224</sup> From P. Corbetta (1993) 'La Lega e Lo Sfaldamento del Sistema'. The first column comes from Table 2, p.240 and the second from Table 3, p.241 which expresses the same data as a percentage of the League's vote in 1992.



spanning the traditional left-right spectrum from former communists to neo-fascists, in an election in which it soared up 8% in terms of the national vote as the third column of the table makes clear. Significantly the gaining of votes from the subcultural Christian Democrat and Communist parties is offset by adherents from such diverse groups as the neo-fascist MSI and the Greens. The 25% gained from the DC was actually less than if the League had attracted voters from all parties equally, dependent only on their vote-share. These findings of heterogeneity are confirmed by the tensions during the 1994 campaign caused by the alliance with Berlusconi, the discontent with him summed up thus by one *leghista* interviewed : ‘Because he is on the right, whilst I, if I was not a *leghista*, would be on the left’<sup>225</sup>. Moreover Bossi after the 1994 election issued several veiled threats regarding the League’s ability to ally with the centre and even the left in response to Berlusconi’s talk of returning to the electorate. The League did indeed make its first such alliance, after the collapse of the government in December 1994, against *Forza Italia* and the National Alliance, in the victorious campaign for the mayor of Padua in the Veneto in April 1995.<sup>226</sup> and its go-it-alone tactic in the 1996 election confirms its unpredictable nature. The Northern League cannot be accurately seen as an uncomplicated right-wing party.

There is no discernible pattern as to where the League attracts its votes from. There is no unicausal explanation, rather a complex interaction of different factors which this chapter will seek to clarify. Corbetta extends his analysis to testing the dominant theses of partisan make-up of the leagues through log-linear analysis. He finds the model with most statistical significance is one employing the traditional left-right

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<sup>225</sup> From interview in [La Repubblica, 27/2/94] p.7.

<sup>226</sup> This is a sentiment shared by League activists whom I interviewed thus :  
 “..from the political point of view, we have moved from the image of a racist party, a party of the right, and that’s better for the function we perform...there are many opinions, there is the more liberal opinion, and there is the more left-wing opinion, there are so many opinions, in fact it’s difficult sometimes to bring them all together in a party.”  
 “..it is clear that the League is neither of the right or the left and almost everyone shares the political line and everyone shares the same political objective, so we are quite united.”.

spectrum but which situates the League at a point outside it, equidistant from all parties. It simply cannot be pinned down on the traditional partisan spectrum, given the flows outlined above. Thus the League's 1992 electoral performance comprises :

"A vote so undifferentiated, so uniformly distributed across the partisan arc, that has at its root either a new cleavage which traverses all the parties at the same time, a cleavage which has up till now remained latent in society and moreover unexplored in the programmes of the other parties, or it is the product of the moulting of the system."<sup>227</sup>

For Corbetta it is this last factor which possesses the chief explanatory power for the League's rise. They have been the beneficiaries of a flaking of the system not along any ideological or social schism, but rather from exasperation with and antagonism toward the traditional parties and organs of the state. He dismisses the ability of neo-regionalism to serve as a new cross-party cleavage, describing the 'northism' of the Northern League as a 'rhetorical invention'.

However, this latter claim is based on the author's own assertion and may be challenged by empirical data cited by Diamanti and the endurance of the League through the 1994 and 1996 elections. The attitudes summarised in Table 5.2 come from a survey conducted by the Poster Institute from December 1992-January 1993 of 660 voters equally distributed between Lombardy and the Veneto of whom 145 declared themselves close to the Lombard or Venetian Leagues respectively. The interviewees were asked about their feelings about institutional reform and the answers were then broken down as follows :

**Table 5.2<sup>228</sup>**

**Attitudes Toward Institutional Reform in Lombardy and the Veneto**  
(% of sample and each sub-sample)

	All	'Leghisti'	'Lombardi'	'Veneti'
Status Quo	14	6	11	0
More powers to regions	39	30	46	9
All regions special statute	29	27	15	41
Three Macroregions	12	24	21	29
Separation of the North	7	13	7	21
N=	660	145	78	67

<sup>227</sup> P. Corbetta (1993) op. cit. p.248.

<sup>228</sup> I. Diamanti (1993) op. cit. p.101, Table 10.

Whilst one must again be wary of the size of the sample there are several features revealed by the table. Most noticeable is the fact that only 6% of League voters feel happy with the constitutional status quo compared with 14% of all voters, itself a noteworthy figure for a nation which had been unified for over a century, before limited regionalism was introduced in 1970. This single-figure response is similar to the small numbers of SNP voters who are content with the British status quo. Meanwhile as the reform options become more radical i.e. the League's proposal of the time - macro-regions - or beyond this complete separation, the gap between the '*leghisti*' and all voters becomes more pronounced, a trend which, when added to the feelings on territorial belonging reported earlier in Table 3.1 from the same survey, seems sufficient to challenge Corbetta's dismissal of regional identity as a possible new cleavage cutting across the old Italian schisms. Of note are the considerable internal differences which characterise the Northern League : just as Venetian voters were twice as likely to feel 'northern' as their Lombard counterparts, they are also considerably more radical in their vision of the future with three times as many in favour of complete separation for the North, and not one of them satisfied with the status quo. These differences serve to remind one again of the internal heterogeneity of the league phenomenon and Diamanti posits that they spring in part from the different historical trajectories earlier outlined and indeed from the different histories of many of Italy's regions.

Before turning to a consideration of the voting models best equipped to explain the League's decade of rise, it is necessary to provide evidence for the contention that the League's vote has now 'normalised' in terms of political and sociological composition and so escape from the simplistic electoral pigeon-holing which too often characterises analyses of the movement. The League is a far more subtle phenomenon than either the German Republikaner or French National Front parties with which many journalists and several academics blithely compared it.

Mannheimer's 1991 study with its specific focus on the Lombard League began to recognise its complexity but also highlighted a tendency toward male, intolerant and uneducated voters which the explosion in 1992 and subsequent sustaining in 1994 and increase in 1996 made redundant. Put simply, if the League had been constrained to a fairly narrow sector of the electorate it could not have grown so rapidly, Diamanti hinted at his later conclusion in his chapter in Mannheimer's collection, thus:

"The consensus of the Lombard League, therefore, rather than traversing one precise and distinct profile, seems to express itself across a 'plurality' of profiles which are related and, at times, overlapping, because the borders which characterise them are not always clear-cut."<sup>229</sup>

Further data from the same Poster Institute survey of January 1993 in Diamanti's book is shown in Table 5.3 below, to back up this 'normalisation' assertion:

**Table 5.3<sup>230</sup>**  
**Northern League Vote by Gender & Age (% of sample and sub-sample)**

	Northerners	'Leghisti'	'Lombardi'	'Veneti'
Male	48	51	56	48
Female	52	49	44	52
Age:				
18-35	41	45	49	39
36-50	28	26	26	25
> 50	31	30	25	36
N=	660	145	78	67

This data suggests that the previous male bias of League supporters had waned with no significant gender imbalance amongst 'leghisti' in 1992, although there was a considerable gap in Lombardy, made up by a female preponderance in the Veneto. There is, however, still a noticeable trend for League supporters to belong to younger age cohorts. This is particularly pronounced in Lombardy with just under half of those interviewed being under 35 (unfortunately the Italian norms in age cohorts differ from the more specific British measures, thus preventing direct comparison). In the Veneto there is a more even spread of support across age which may be a

<sup>229</sup> I. Diamanti in R. Mannheimer (1991) op. cit. p. 166.

<sup>230</sup> I. Diamanti (1993) op. cit. p. 98, Table 7.

function of the *Liga Veneta's* longer history. Diamanti's data also revealed a tendency for League supporters to lack advanced educational qualifications, with *leghisti* being only half as likely as the general public to have a university degree.

Data from the revised 1995 version of Diamanti's book seems to contradict some of these trends, as Table 5.4 below makes clear :

<b>Table 5.4<sup>231</sup></b>		
<b>League Vote by Gender, Age and Educational Qualification</b>		
	League Voters	Northern Voters
Gender:		
Male	62	51
Female	38	49
Age:		
18-29	35	27
30-39	21	25
40-49	23	17
50-59	17	17
60+	4	7
Education:		
No/Elementary Qualification	11	10
Ordinary Qualification	39	35
Advanced Qualification	45	43
Degree Qualification	5	12
N=	115	1339

These figures confirm the bias toward a youthful age group with the League attracting significantly more than average votes from those below thirty. They also back up the portrayal of League voters as slightly less well educated than the norm. However, the figures suggest that in 1995 the gender gap previously seen to narrow had returned to the league vote to suggest male bias as an enduring facet of the Northern League vote.

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<sup>231</sup> This data comes from an IPSO survey for 'Il Corriere Della Sera' directed by Renato Mannheimer in January 1995 involving almost 3,000 respondents. The columns show the League voters contrasted to all voters in the North (defined as far south as Tuscany). The data is quoted in I. Diamanti (1995) "*La Lega - Geografia, Storia e Sociologia di un Soggetto Politico*" Table 9, p.163 & Table 10, p.164.



In general the picture presented is of a fairly normal electorate with small deviations on gender, age and education. The '*leghisti*' do not inhabit some kind of quasi-subcultural ghetto. Mirroring the complexity of their former votes and their attitudes to identity, the League's sociological make-up can be seen to be anything but simplistic causing Mannheimer to conclude that:

"As has been underlined in the past, the choice of voting for the League is not reducible to one single characteristic, but is determined by the simultaneous marriage of a series of attachments, characteristics and orientations"<sup>232</sup>

#### **5.4 The League and Voting Models**

How best can we understand the League in terms of voting-behaviour models? In this context the specificity of the first Italian Republic must be noted. As earlier discussed in Chapter Three, the party-voter relationship was very stunted by the two dominant subcultures and by the patron-client relationship which held sway especially in the South. The strong Catholic and Communist links meant that the Italian system developed a subcultural form of voting behaviour. The Italian case can be discussed more generally as part of the 'dominant identity' model of voting where membership of a social group is a more important determinant of voting than any 'rational actor' considerations, in that voting becomes equivalent to an affirmation of belonging.<sup>233</sup> Thus the Republic was characterised by defined zones of 'red' and 'white' subcultural voting, the latter being supplemented in the South by the clientelistic exchange vote. The fact that deviations from this pattern were termed 'votes of opinion' confirms the fact that identity and belonging was more important than individual motive for many Italians in the bulk of the elections held since the Second World War.

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<sup>232</sup> R. Mannheimer (1993) op. cit. p.271.

<sup>233</sup> For a definitive account of the various types of vote see A. Parisi and G. Pasquino 'Relazioni Partiti-Elettori e Tipi di Voto' in G. Pasquino (1985) (ed.) "Il Sistema Politico Italiano" pp.74-97.

Situating the League in this context is confusing because it is both symptomatic of and causal in the break-down of subcultural stability. Thus from the terrorism-filled years of the late 1970s, there was evidence of an erosion of the dominance of subcultural votes in the decline of vote share of the Christian Democrats(DC) and Communist(PCI) parties. Concomitant to this, there was a rise in abstention levels and the tentative emergence of new parties such as the Greens and the Pensioners party in the early 1980s. There was some room for the League to emerge then and, as mentioned earlier, much of the initial appeal in the Veneto was to disaffected Christian Democrats. However the explosion of the League to over three million votes in the North in the early 1990s then helped to bring about the collapse of post-war norms which saw the complete disappearance of both the DC and the PCI. How then should the League be explained in the explicit appeal it made to voters?

The initial analyses of the League situated it very much in the 'protest' model, and comparisons were drawn with the short-lived post-war *L'Uomo Qualunque* Party.<sup>234</sup> However the associated attributes of extreme voter volatility and a lack of party identification are challenged both by the growth of the League at each successive election through the late 1980s and 1990s and also by Corbetta's analysis which suggest a high percentage of his sample voted again for the League, indicative of at least some degree of affiliation. Undoubtedly there was and is an element of protest in the League's vote, as there is for any non-establishment party, but it is not enough to wholly explain its endurance well beyond the stage of being a simple 'flash' party.

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<sup>234</sup> This literally translates as the Common Man's Front - it came to the fore in the aftermath of the Second World War and obtained over a million votes and 30 deputies in the 1948 election. Its main appeal lay in the South amongst the peasantry who were very anti-centralist and resented the post-war agricultural reforms, and with whom its leader, Giannini's, campaigns on behalf of the 'ordinary Italian' struck a chord. It did not endure, however, and its only lasting contribution came in the bequeathing of the term '*qualunquista*' meaning a cynic or potential fascist. It is in the application of this insult to Bossi's party that some have drawn the comparison between the League and the Front but there is little to substantively connect them - see Ginsborg (1990) op. cit. pp.99-100.

Many in the Italian press and beyond predicted that 1996, like 1994 before it, would see the demise of the League but instead they claimed more votes than ever.

Other explanations of the League have looked at the degree to which it has managed to become an 'identity' party itself, creating some sort of new cleavage. On such a reading the League filled the vacuum which the collapse of the old order left and with its spin-off organisations, party paper and extensive merchandise operation set about creating its own quasi-subculture with associated changes in values. Paolo Natale in his chapter analysing the territorial dispersal of the vote in Mannheimer's analysis of the Lombard League was struck by the uniformity of its spread outwards from the epicentres of the mid-1980s till it stretched all the way across the North by the early-1990s, such that:

"The quality of this diffusion (of votes) presents some resemblance with the type of territorial base, for example, of the 'red' or 'white' zones : this can therefore be interpreted as a signal of a phenomenon which could, in the next few years, turn into the formation of a new territorial, political culture."<sup>235</sup>

However the evidence of the intervening years is not conclusive, the League is still a major party of the North but, after 1994 and the entry of *Forza Italia*, it was no longer on an unstoppable rise. Diamanti has termed March 1994 as marking the League as 'a party for the peripheries' which was concentrated in "the zones in which the league phenomenon had seen its first affirmation".<sup>236</sup> The jury is still out on the territorial nature of the 1996 elections but the figures reported earlier point to a wide coverage suggesting one can argue for the growth of a Rokkan-esque schism between centre and periphery as explanatory of recent voting patterns. As with the 'protest' model it is likely that the 'identity' model explains some but not all of the League's appeal. As Pasquino says : "The regionalist cleavage, or centre-periphery, is for the League only a pretext, or rather a point of departure."<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> P. Natale in R. Mannheimer (1991) op. cit. p.104.

<sup>236</sup> I. Diamanti (1994) op. cit. p. 675.

<sup>237</sup> G. Pasquino (1991) 'Meno Partito Piu Lega' p. 557.

This leaves a much more 'materialist' conception of the League's vote - put simply this would contend that the League's rise is fundamentally tied up with economic concerns. The most relevant voting model here would normally be the 'relative deprivation' one, although it may seem at first glance to be inappropriate for the North of Italy which represents one of the most prosperous regions of the European Union. However the vital factor in this model is the *feeling* of relative deprivation and the concomitant belief that it is an unnecessary consequence of the political situation, most commonly of centralist mismanagement. To avoid a confusion of terms due to the connotations of the concept of relative poverty, one can rephrase it as 'potential wealth'. This term captures the idea that despite being apparently affluent, a region can still feel some kind of collective, relative poverty when compared to the standard of what could have been.

Support for this line of argument comes from the research conducted by Renato Mannheimer into the League's electorate in the 1992 general election.<sup>238</sup> He uses correlations to quantify the most important factors in the decision to vote for the League, as compared to other parties. He finds economic and fiscal factors the most useful in distinguishing *leghisti*, followed by a distrust of politicians and Southerners and then by the age of the interviewee, thus:

"This factor [economics] is shown to be the best in distinguishing the League's electors from those of other parties. Added to this, though with less weight, there is evidence for the importance of distrust in politicians and Southerners and for the role of youthful age."<sup>239</sup>

Pride in one's region of residence distinguishes only one in five League voters, which represents only a quarter of the number (78%) distinguished by economic factors, although it must be noted that Italians of all complexions have retained a strong sense of locality since unification, which may explain this lack of explanatory power.

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<sup>238</sup> R. Mannheimer (1993) op. cit.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid. p. 271.

Mannheimer adds the rider that there are many whose votes are not explained by the factors outlined which he attributes to the composite nature across the political spectrum of the League's support.

An economics-based argument can thus be made that through the constant redistribution from North to South under the centralised state, institutionalised under the Christian Democrats as the '*Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*' (The Southern Fund), Northerners feel 'relatively deprived' in the sense that they could have been a lot richer without this type of drain. Certainly the League's rhetoric makes much of the Southern albatross around the Northerners' neck and its effect on the North's 'potential wealth' and place at the core of Europe. However previous parties had campaigned for wholesale fiscal reform without achieving significant electoral success. It is in the interaction of this economic argument with the revival of territorial identity that the specificity of the League is to be found. The League was fortunate in the timing of international events, especially the ending of the Cold War which hammered further nails into the subcultural coffin already under construction in the 1980s. However it still had to capitalise on these circumstances, but in Gallagher's words, it did just this: "The League has built up an electoral constituency by turning regional identity into a new political resource and identifying a series of threats felt to endanger the economic prosperity and cultural identity of Northern Italy."<sup>240</sup>

Finally, mention should be made of the 'new social movements' voting theory which follows the Inglehart line of post-industrial politics where social movements replace staid political parties and attract young, middle class egalitarian adults in mature democracies. This argument stands in stark contrast to that just outlined for it would situate the League's voters as post-materialist in their value orientation. Whilst the

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<sup>240</sup> T. Gallagher (1992a) 'The Rise of the Regional Leagues in Italy' p.66.



League's voter profile does reveal an attraction of the young and the middle classes, it seems hard to sustain that their primary motivation is post-material when economic well-being remains so central a plank.<sup>241</sup> Their voter profile may be progressive but the content of their message is in some ways reactionary. However the penultimate section of this chapter will argue that Inglehart does have relevance to Italy when one also considers the critiques of his theory. Italy has seen one of the most rapid developments in per capita GDP<sup>242</sup> in the post-war era and such far reaching changes have not bypassed value systems. The problem comes in disentangling material and identity motives from values, particularly when one is dealing with as electorally promiscuous a party as the League has been.

There is no one voting model which explains adherence to the League, rather a complex matrix of motives supplemented by the League's own marriage of protest, identity, belonging, economics and a feeling of some sort of potential affluence, notwithstanding the region's comparative prosperity. The League then has managed to interweave many different values into a coherent political message. It is not simply an ethno-regionalist party, nor a protest party, nor an anti-system party, rather it is all of these things and more and it manages to combine these different facets in an inclusionist manner. It has managed to turn the geographical limitations it faced into a powerful electoral asset. The Northern League stands as the one party to successfully bridge the gap between the last years of the First Republic and the first years of its successor. Through its pragmatism and adaptation it is in prime position to answer the desires of those Italian citizens who want greater autonomy for the

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<sup>241</sup> Evidence for this economic attitude can be found in numerous surveys, for example Mannheimer presents CNR survey findings which show 66% of leghisti believing that taxes should stay in the region where they are paid, as opposed to 36% of the public at large - see R. Mannheimer (1993) op. cit. Table 5 p. 263.

<sup>242</sup> However the GDP per capita is hugely unbalanced between North and South, for instance 1990 figures which take the Italian average to be 100 show Lombardy to be above 130 and Sicily and Calabria to be between 50 and 70 - see [The Economist 'Until the Fat Lady Sings' - A Survey of Italy, 26/6/93].

North, whether they hold a materialist or post-materialist outlook. Vitally these citizens do not represent a very closeted, unrepresentative group, rather they mirror closely the broad cross-section of Scots who also desire greater autonomy, as the next section will make clear.

**5.5 Nationalists with a capital ‘N’**

The period in which the SNP is to be explicitly studied is from the 1970s onwards and the resources for comparison across this time are ample with the boosted Scottish Election Surveys of 1974, 1979 and 1992. It is fair to say that whilst the SNP didn’t quite explode onto the political scene at quite the same rate as the Northern League; it certainly emerged quickly after forty unspectacular years, when it had been little more than a rump grouping. Thus its vote rose from 2.4 % of the national vote in 1964 to 30.4% a decade later. Even when one takes the 10.7% gained in 1964 in the seats contested, the expansion was remarkable and as earlier shown in Chapter Four it caused large effects on the other Scottish political parties. The October 1974 election was studied in depth by an Election Survey team and their data provides much information on the make-up of the SNP’s vote at the critical time of its explosion onto the Scottish political scene. It was a vote characterised by its youth, its masculinity and its social mobility, thus:

**Table 5.5<sup>243</sup>**  
**SNP Vote In October 1974 by Age and Gender (% by age cohort)**

	All	Male	Female
18 to 24	41.7	50.0	32.1
25 to 34	39.0	45.1	33.3
35 to 44	29.3	36.0	23.2
45 to 54	24.7	36.2	17.0
55 to 64	20.1	22.7	17.1
65 or over	16.8	16.1	16.3
Total	28.4	34.2	22.9

<sup>243</sup> S. Kendrick (1983) op. cit. p. 42 Figures taken from the 1974 Scottish Election Survey - percentages are for SNP share of total electors surveyed.

These figures from Kendrick show the SNP dominant over Labour as the largest party amongst both the 18-24 and the 25-34 age groups and the most striking piece of data is the fact that one in two male voters aged between 18 and 24, and so very likely to be first time voters in one of the two elections of 1974, voted for the SNP. The gap between the male and female voters is also significant through all age cohorts except the 65 or over one, yet as Kendrick says “this differential has received remarkably little attention”<sup>244</sup>. It simply seemed to be accepted by commentators that independence was somehow a more ‘macho’ policy option and so attracted a higher male vote, mirroring the initial masculinity of the Northern League.

What of the social distribution of the SNP vote? Again the 1974 Scottish Election Survey provides valuable data as Table 5.6 below shows:

**Table 5.6<sup>245</sup>**  
**Scottish National Party Vote in October 1974 by Social Class**  
 (% by class strata in rows)

	All	Male	Female
A	27	39	11
B	32	35	28
C1A	29	37	22
C1B	28	30	27
C2	32	39	24
D	23	24	23
All	28	34	23

This table shows a remarkable spread of SNP voters across all social classes with only the female vote at the highest social grade standing out as significantly lower than the vote share across the electorate. The contrast with other parties is instructive as Table 5.7 with a four-party breakdown overleaf shows:

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid. p. 41.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid. p. 268 - again percentages are for share of total electors.

**Table 5.7<sup>246</sup>**  
**All Parties Votes by social class in October 1974 (% by row)**

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal	SNP
A	45	15	13	27
B	40	16	13	32
C1A	41	22	7	29
C1B	31	31	10	28
C2	15	47	6	32
D	14	61	2	23
All	25	38	8	28

The spread of votes for the Conservative and Labour parties here is broadly in inverse proportion and is very much in keeping with the class-based voting model which has been dominant in explanations of the post-war British polity. However the Scottish National Party stood very much outside this model, with an evenly-spread 'classless' vote. One is reminded here of Corbetta's 'flaking' metaphor in describing the flow of votes to the Northern League - there was no one dominant sector of society, nor party from which the SNP made its advance, rather its vote represented a heterogeneous and volatile cocktail made up of several differently motivated mixers. Such an analysis fits with the SNP's history both before and after its spectacular rise of 1974. Before that time, most commentaries point to the SNP as an elitist, cultural party with little mass appeal (an attitude backed up in interviews with older activists). This started to change after the good by-election showings of the early 1960s, and the SNP could not have grown so quickly had its appeal not shifted and widened (mirroring the Venetian League to Lombard League shift in the mid-1980s). Likewise the manner in which the SNP vote slipped back in 1979 and 1983 is suggestive of a fragile electorate, mobile and uncommitted to independence per se, but which had used the SNP to try and hasten some constitutional reform. There was no mass Pauline conversion to nationalism, rather a pragmatic use of Scotland's four-party system. As Kendrick says:

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid. p. 268 Table 6.5 The size of the subsamples used are A-60; B-101; C1A-112; C1B-120; C2-337 and D-183.

“One could almost say that this suggests that the meaning of SNP voting is largely to be found in the experience of a generation - a generation that came to political maturity in the thirty years after the Second World War. However, the rate of fluctuation of the SNP vote itself - from 11% in 1970 to a peak of 30% in October 1974 and back down to 17% in 1979 - was far too great to be explicable in terms of the differing political beliefs of successive cohorts of voters”<sup>247</sup>

In the 1970s then the SNP was in a situation very anomalous to the Northern League in the early 1990s, appealing to disaffected voters right across the partisan spectrum but not necessarily for the same reasons and on the same values. But after its disappointments of 1979 and 1983 it emerged a more self-consciously party of the left, although the data from the 1992 Scottish Election Survey seems to suggest that the SNP is still difficult to situate definitively on the traditional left-right spectrum, even for its own supporters.<sup>248</sup> However the SNP has to face a factor unknown to the League which is explicit constitutional competition. One of the most striking features of Table 4.4 reported in the previous chapter is the durability of the Labour vote in the 1990s - it remains entrenched around the 40% figure and brings Labour disproportionate reward in terms of seats won.<sup>249</sup> The SNP rise in the 1990s then can hardly be said to have come at the expense of Labour, yet it is this party which the SNP sets about with the greatest vitriol. This in itself is a natural stance given the SNP's self-positioning since the loss of its 1974 constituency. A by-product of this repositioning has been an increased animosity with its main rival Labour and in recent elections the direct campaigning against each other has reached vitriolic proportions, as the sectarian element in the 1994 Monklands by-election clearly illustrated.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid. p. 44.

<sup>248</sup> J. Brand et.al. (1994a) op. cit. p. 620 Table 2 summed up that “amongst its own voters it has not had as much success as might be expected. A large proportion of SNP voters placed their party neither on the left nor the right.”

<sup>249</sup> Of the seats available Labour won 68% at the 1992 general election, 75 % at the 1994 European elections and 53% at the 1995 regional elections.

<sup>250</sup> The May 1994 regional elections saw an explicit attempt to replace the Labour party as the choice of working-class Scots. It is a strategy highlighted in the following SNP regional election leaflet: “Labour a once great political party, founded by women and men of



The biggest problem for the SNP in the scenario outlined is that it is not the dominant party, indeed it is the antithesis of such since it is striving to break the status quo. Thus it has undoubtedly had an influence on the Labour Party in making it much more committed in the 1990s than it ever has been to the fundamentals of devolution, as their involvement in the Constitutional Convention makes clear. However in then trying to prise away voters from that party to its programme of 'Independence in Europe' it faces a twofold problem. Firstly its combative approach entrenches many Labour partisans - there is tangible hatred between the parties as my interviews with SNP activists make clear.<sup>251</sup> Such aggression makes future defection in either direction very difficult (hence its headline news status if it occurs as when Isobel Lindsay left the SNP for Labour over the former's non-participation in the Constitutional Convention), for Gallagher:

"The level of aggression the SNP directs at its chief foe is in danger of discrediting politics as a worthwhile activity from which citizens can expect a better future... The SNP may unwittingly, through its aggressive tactics, have reinforced the existing party boundaries in Scotland during a period when they could have been more flexible."<sup>252</sup>

What has happened sociologically to the SNP vote since the 1970s? Table 5.8 shows the gender findings of the Scottish Election Surveys in 1974, 1979 and 1992 supplemented by MORI polls from 1984 and 1989 (there was no Scottish booster to the British Election Surveys of 1983 and 1987):

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principle and compassion, dedicated to changing society, is now transformed into a sterile electoral machine, with no vision, abandoning principles for the sake of power, yet delivering nothing for Scotland." Meanwhile Salmond made his opinion very clear addressing a rally of young nationalists in 1989 "It is only through undermining the Labour Party in Scotland that we can achieve our objectives" quoted in T. Gallagher (1991) op. cit. p.119.

<sup>251</sup> For instance "The Constitutional Convention was set up basically by the Labour party to stymie us, we could have a Labour government in Scotland now regardless of the result of the last general election, the fact is that the Labour Party in Scotland prefers a British Tory government to a Scottish Labour government."

"Scotland gets branded as a region, we are a nation, we're the oldest nation in this hemisphere but the Westminster government and the so-called Scottish Labour Party believes that we're a region."

<sup>252</sup> T. Gallagher (1991) op. cit. p.6.

**Table 5.8<sup>253</sup>**  
**SNP Support by gender 1974-1992 (% supporting party)**

	Male	Female
1974	34	23
1979	18	13
1984	10	10
1989	22	25
1992	26	21

Given the relative closeness of the sampling sizes in these different snapshots of opinion, one can see that there has been a normalising of the gender difference over time. Both the male and female vote-share declined dramatically in the late 1970s and the early 1980s as the SNP suffered the backlash from the 1979 fiasco. Both have since recovered with 1989's slight female lead having been overhauled by 1992, although both of these differences are within the sampling error margin. It could be argued that the SNP seems to possess a larger potential male vote, having reached one-third of Scottish males in October 1974, whereas the female maximum was one quarter, albeit in 1989. Certainly the large differences seen in the early 1970s are no longer a dominant feature of its vote.

What has happened to the class make-up of the SNP vote over the same time period? Table 5.9 uses the same sources to evidence the class make-up of the SNP's vote over time:

**Table 5.9<sup>254</sup>**  
**SNP Support by Social Class 1974-1992 (% of each class)**

	Non-Manual	Manual
1974	29	26
1979	18	14
1984	9	10
1989	22	24
1992	21	26

<sup>253</sup> These figures come from A. Brown, D. McCrone & L. Paterson (1996) *"Politics and Society in Scotland"* p.147 Table 7.3. The relevant sample sizes, given as male, female are as follows : 1974 - 550, 488; 1979 - 306, 332; 1984 - 373, 456; 1989 - 464, 457 and 1992 377, 439.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid. p.151 Table 7.6. Here the sample sizes are (non-manual, manual) : 1974 - 392, 646; 1979 - 249, 392; 1984 - 265, 564; 1989 - 317, 604; 1992 - 406, 410.

Here the gender fall in party support is mirrored with the substantial mid-1980's dip in both non-manual and manual support. However more of note is the move toward a more non-manual base, although again one must express caution as to sampling error. These figures certainly lend credence to the SNP becoming a more left-wing party due to its explicit battle with the Labour Party in the bulk of Scottish seats. To try and provide a more detailed picture of the trends over the last few years Table 5.10 overleaf summarises opinion poll findings over that period:

**Table 5.10<sup>255</sup>**  
**SNP Opinion Poll Ratings by Gender, Age and Social Class (%)**

MORI	All	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-54	55+	AB	C1	C2	DE
Feb. 1989	24	23	25	27	27	25	19	21	23	22	27
Feb. 1990	17	16	18	23	20	18	11	7	19	20	16
ICM	All	Male	Female	18-34	35-64	65+	AB/C1	C2	DE		
Sep. 1991	19	20	18	23	17	15	15	19	22		
Jan. 1992	21	27	15	24	22	14	19	25	20		
Apr. 1992	19	21	18	29	17	7	19	25	16		
Jun. 1994	24	26	22	29	22	21	24	27	22		
Feb. 1995	19	22	16	20	20	15	16	21	21		

These figures show that the SNP still retains an age bias, but it is far less pronounced than in the 1970s and the latest February 1995 poll shows the same level of support, 20%, for both the 18-34 and 35-64 cohorts. There is also a gender difference in the ICM figures, although the MORI polls give a small majority of female supporters. The difference in recent ICM polls is larger than that for age or social class, causing McCrone to conclude that : "the SNP, uniquely among the parties in Scotland, continues to appeal less successfully to women than to men."<sup>256</sup> However the discrepancy seems less stark than in the 1970s and, as the MORI polls and the

<sup>255</sup> The first two polls quoted here are MORI opinion polls and the rest ICM ones (borrowed from David McCrone's collection). The percentages are SNP proportions of the total interviewed. Unfortunately the age and class cohorts are measured slightly differently by these two different companies, but broad comparisons can still be made. These polls all involved a sample of just over 1,000 people in between 30 and 40 Scottish constituencies - their headline voting figures are reported in the newspapers but these figures come from the detailed cross-tabulation tables.

<sup>256</sup> David McCrone (1994c) 'Opinion Polls in Scotland July 1994-June 1995' p. 142.

Scottish Election Surveys quoted in Table 5.7 show, it is fairly fluid. Finally when broken down in social class the SNP's vote is still well distributed, there are problems of direct comparison because of the different categories used in defining class, but it still seems true to say that the SNP garners votes from across the social spectrum if to a lesser extent than when it exploded in the 1970s, whilst the Labour Party attracts around twice as many voters as the SNP in the battleground DE cohort, and is still more skewed towards a class base.

The second problem which the SNP has traditionally faced and the League has not, on top of Labour hegemony, is the even more troublesome one that it has yet to win over a majority of Scots to support of independence. Apart from a 'Scotsman' poll of January 1992 in which the total favouring the different options of independence totalled more than 50%, thus setting off a media frenzy, there has been no evidence that the majority of Scots favour the independence option. In fact on the contrary the body of evidence suggests that the largest proportion of Scots want devolution and Table 5.11 below summarises the attitudes toward constitutional reform shown from 1974 until 1992 :

<p><b>Table 5.11<sup>257</sup></b>  <b>Preferences for Constitutional Change (%)</b></p>			
	Independence	Home Rule	Status Quo
1974	21	44	34
1979	7	54	26
1984	25	45	27
1989	34	49	15
1992	23	50	24

Thus there has been a consolidation through the 1980s and the early 1990s of the independence option, with the dip in 1992 coming after the intense constitutional debate in the run-up to the general election. However the home rule or devolution

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<sup>257</sup> A. Brown et al.(1996) op. cit. p.152 Table 7.7 The sample sizes are 1974 - 1175; 1979 - 729; 1984 - 962; 1989 - 1054 and 1992 - 957. " 'Independence' refers to options which mentioned that word or 'separation'. 'Home Rule' refers to any other type of directly elected assembly or parliament."

option is clearly the most consistent performer as the option favoured by roughly half of all Scots. It was the status quo which fell back as independence surged in 1989, not the home rule option. The situation is worsened for the SNP by its own failure to win a majority of those who favour independence. For example in an ICM poll from April-May 1996, the SNP had 25% of its supporters favouring and 6% the status quo whilst the other three parties had significant minorities choosing independence within the European Union, the SNP's policy as their favourite choice.<sup>258</sup> There are then many electors who favour independence but don't back the SNP, as Newman says:

"The SNP is still unable to mobilise adequately the independence vote. In the glory days of 1974, 60.5% of independence supporters voted SNP. By May 1979 that number had dropped to 49.2%. In March 1991 approximately 29% of all supporters of independence would vote SNP."<sup>259</sup>

There is danger here of becoming over-reliant on single pieces of evidence but the trend is definitely apparent, for instance in the Herald/System Three opinion poll of January 1995 the SNP got 43% of the preferences of those who said they favoured its policy of independence within Europe, but the Labour Party got 51% of this same group, a fact initially obscured because of relative party sizes.<sup>260</sup> This lack of fit between constitutional preference and voting has always been a thorn in the SNP's side. Since 1974 the SNP has struggled both to make its own supporters favour independence and to make all those in favour of independence vote for it, however the move away from the status quo reported in Table 5.10 above does provide some succour, As Brown et. al. make clear:

"..it seems reasonable to say that someone who expresses support for independence is fairly determined about constitutional change. In other words, the most cautious interpretation of the rise in the support for the independence option...is that it tells us about the strength of support for some type of Scottish parliament, even if not necessarily about the strength

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<sup>258</sup> ICM poll April-May 1996 with a sample size of 1,000. Those in favour of independence as their constitutional option were Conservative-17%, Labour-29%, SNP-67% and Liberal-13%.

<sup>259</sup> S. Newman (1992) op. cit. p.27.

<sup>260</sup> See Herald/System Three Poll on Scottish Self-Government of January 1995, p.5.



of the parliament that would be supported.”<sup>261</sup>

Thus the 1990's Scottish polity is far more complex than the 1970's one with many more constitutional options on offer and the SNP an established player, rather than a new entrant. This endogenous change has made it more difficult for the SNP to appear distinct, a change predicted by Kendrick when writing about the 1970s, thus:

“It is this historical specificity of the experience which produced the SNP surge which makes looking into the future all but impossible. What is certain is that whatever the form in which the Scottish dimension is manifested in the future, it will inevitably be quite different from the confident surge which this study has attempted to understand. That is the only inevitability.”<sup>262</sup>

National identity is now a key concept in Scottish politics but one must consider all the four parties as in some ways Scottish. The Labour, Liberal-Democrat and Conservative parties all have distinctive organisations from the British parties and the SNP certainly has no monopoly on the Scottish identity, as the evidence has shown. It has long outlived the honeymoon period which the Northern League in Italy found itself in until 1994 - a vital difference to be taken into account in the analysis of the two of them and their activists and supporters which the next chapter will undertake. However in terms of the heterogeneity of their vote and its spread across the partisan spectrum, this section has shown the Scottish National Party to bear considerable similarities to the Northern League. The next section will ask whether these similarities extend into the realm of which voting models best explain the SNP.

## **5.6 The SNP and Voting Models**

Much of the work in assessing the SNP in terms of the same voting behaviour models which were earlier applied to the Northern League has already been done by

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<sup>261</sup> A. Brown et. al. (1996) op. cit. p. 132.

<sup>262</sup> S. Kendrick (1983) op. cit. p.386.

Jack Brand and his colleagues in a series of articles looking at the SNP and its import on the Scottish political system. Of most relevance is their article in 'Political Studies' in 1994 in which they use data from the 1992 Scottish Election survey to assess the protest, identity, new social movements and relative deprivation models.

Saul Newman sees the SNP as simply one of many examples of failed single-issue, protest movements such that:

"..the decline of the SNP tends to foreshadow a revolving door of single-issue movements that enter the political arena, partially transform political perceptions and the popularity of political issues, and then recede, eventually to be replaced by new movements emphasising new issues. The traditional political actors may be enlightened by the process but remain largely intact."<sup>263</sup>

In reply to Newman and his specific claim that the SNP decline occurred because voters lacked sufficient loyalty, Brand et. al. show his 'protest' model to explain only a small minority of SNP voters. The level of party affiliation is only slightly below that of the Labour and Conservative parties and still represented a majority of SNP voters in 1992, whilst only 29% of the SNP voters professed a proclivity toward another party. Meanwhile the length of time which the SNP has participated as a valid member of a four-party system suggests that it is definitely not a simple 'flash' protest party, indeed it can be argued that one of its problems lies in being too much a part of the establishment.

As for the 'new social movements' model, the SNP is very much a political party in its structure, though it would probably claim itself to be less hierarchical than its rivals. Its voters are certainly younger in profile and have sympathy with post-materialist concerns such as nuclear disarmament, the ecology and equal opportunities, but : "...the pattern of support for the SNP does, however, appear to have changed. In 1974 the SNP polled equally well amongst both middle-class and working-class identifiers, but in 1992 its support was noticeably higher amongst the

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<sup>263</sup> S. Newman (1992) op. cit. p. 31.

working-class.”<sup>264</sup> Any SNP sympathies with post-material values does not extend to putting them anywhere near the top of their salience list in 1992 which was still dominated by issues such as unemployment, the poll tax, standard of living and the social issue giants, education and health.<sup>265</sup> Most importantly SNP supporters are indistinguishable from their Labour counterparts under this model and so it cannot be said to possess adequate explanatory power, in terms of value changes being the chief causal factor in voting for the SNP.

Likewise perhaps the most intuitively plausible theory, namely the ‘identity’ model, struggles to separate SNP and Labour supporters. For instance, in the 1992 Scottish Election Survey 38% of those who saw themselves as Scottish not British voted SNP but 31% of this cohort voted for the Labour Party. Similarly if one resorts to the class identity which so dominated British politics in the post-war years, there is little to separate the parties either in ‘objective’ or ‘subjective’ class terms and nor do attitudes to constitutional reform explain the SNP’s vote. This is the peril of competing in a system in which the SNP itself has caused two of its three major competitors to be neo-nationalists. The argument now is not over whether change in governance should occur, but rather what type of change it should be, with even the Conservatives participating in the debate since the end of 1995. This is ‘Nationalism’ with a capital ‘N’ versus ‘nationalism’ with a small ‘n’, as Brand says: “..a major problem for the SNP is that the basic Scottish identity, to which the Nationalists want to appeal, is felt almost as strongly by Labour voters as by those who choose the SNP.”<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> J. Brand et.al. (1994a) op. cit. p. 219 - de facto the SNP vote does seem to have become more concentrated amongst traditionally left-wing voters. What this might suggest is a decline in the number of those who associate themselves with the left or the working class.

<sup>265</sup> This evidence comes from an ICM Survey of March 1992 which asked the question “What two or three issues will be most important to you in deciding which party to vote for in the next general election?” The constitutional question came seventh equal with housing and the first ‘post’-material issue was the environment in eleventh position.

<sup>266</sup> Brand et. al (1994b) ‘Social Constituency and Ideological Profile : Scottish Nationalism in the 1990s’ p. 616.

For Brand and his colleagues, whilst elements of all the models need to be included to furnish the full picture, the most explanatory power comes in a 'relative deprivation' model with the added proviso of what type of constitutional change would rectify the deprivation. Thus whilst relative deprivation itself, like the other factors mentioned, fails to separate SNP and Labour voters, when independence is added there is a statistically significant difference:

"We must conclude from these models that it is a feeling of sociotropic relative deprivation based on evaluations of the past that are the most useful in characterising SNP voters...to explain SNP support one requires a sense of community deprivation along with a feeling that constitutional change would help redress the balance."<sup>267</sup>

It can be argued, however, that SNP rhetoric couches the relative deprivation argument in much the same 'potential affluence' terms as the Northern League. There is much talk of the loss of oil and tax revenues to Westminster and a focus on the potential wealth of all Scotland's natural resources, were they not constantly plundered. Scotland, as the next chapter will illustrate, could be a rich, successful European nation, like Denmark, in the SNP's world-view.

Thus the picture of complexity built up in analysing League voters is replicated in looking at the SNP. No one theory dominates and the picture is one of different layers of motive and meaning being filtered through both these parties. Somewhat paradoxically, it seems that it was easier to argue the SNP as being post-materialist in the 1970s than in the 1990s despite the ongoing generational shift which has been occurring. However the sociotropic (concern for one's society and self) rather than egocentric (concern for oneself in society) trait reported above, along with the presence of at least some post-materialist values, show the picture to be a far from simple one. This chapter will be concluded by considering to what extent the

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid. p. 628.

Scottish National Party and the Northern League can be said to represent simple protest movements or deeper, new schisms in their societies.

### **5.7 New Cleavages or Old Protest?**

Both Italy and Britain with their subcultural and class-based cleavages had long established voting patterns which were not going to disappear overnight and deep recessions in both the early 1980s and early 1990s did little to lessen material concerns. Where Inglehart is useful is in trying to understand some of the stimulus to the initial challenges to these systems. Both the Northern League and the Scottish National Party were characterised when they emerged by an overt youthfulness in their vote which fits his theory of generational replacement. There is evidence that both also cut across traditional cleavages and garnered votes from across the political and social spectrum. The image of being outwith the traditional spectrum at a point equidistant from all, conjured up by Corbetta, may have lost some relevance as the SNP has self-consciously pursued Labour votes, but it has not lost all as Corbetta's and Brand's evidence on the difficulty in placing the Northern League and the SNP respectively on the left-right spectrum shows. The extent to which they have created new cleavages will require assessment over a longer time period, but the interim evidence of the 1990s suggests that both have introduced the element of territory to their politics in a substantial way.

It is difficult to sustain the argument that these parties are post-materialist when confronted with the salience of economic factors in the genesis of both parties (a type of relative deprivation which has been termed the 'potential wealth' model). It can be argued that the salience of materialist concerns are so high in Scotland and Northern Italy because of the perceived injustices from the controlling centre and votes for both parties definitely contain an element of protest against the centre. However it is



an enduring form of protest with considerable loyalty which seems to suggest that they represent something beyond simple protest.

Both Scotland and Northern Italy have yet, for many of their citizens, to reach their perceived level of material satiation, because they have been constrained within mismanaging centralist states and so have not explicitly passed to the 'post'-material phase. However the fact that both are, de facto, relatively affluent regions of the world, means that some of their citizens have achieved such a state, hence the sympathy for some post-materialist issues such as the environment and women's rights in both places.

Inglehart's idea of 'post-materialism' it seems is best used in setting the scene for both movements, in the sense that rises in material and physical security helped create the environment for the decline of traditional parties. The 'silent revolution' in values helped in creating a cleaner slate in both Scotland and Northern Italy and so helped create the vital political space which both have exploited. However it is a revolution that certainly the parties in question and those who vote for them, either permanently or periodically, see as essentially unfinished because of their lack of autonomy.

One crucial question to which the remaining chapters of this thesis will be addressed is to what extent contemporary autonomy movements can themselves be seen as part of this revolution. Are they an accompaniment to the economic and social changes of post-war Europe or a conservative reaction to it?

## **5.8 Summary**

The last two chapters have looked explicitly at the two parties to be compared in this thesis. By closely examining the partisan histories and the sociological make-up of the Italian Northern League and the Scottish National Party, they have shown several salient traits which both share. Neither party is a simple, protest party - both attract heterogeneous social class backing, which suggests an appeal to some sort of umbrella identity or a positioning outwith the traditional left-right spectrum. Both parties seemed initially to display a tendency to appeal to male voters, though this factor has declined in size as they have remained on the political scene. More permanent seems to be the proclivity toward younger age cohorts of both parties, suggestive that both have benefited, at least, from the generational aspects of post-materialism and the dealignments which both the Italian and British systems have undergone in the last few decades. However the most convincing explanations for the emergence of both the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League remain those based on material, economic concerns and the ways in which the perceived potential wealth can be achieved.

A large question has then been raised, namely, to what extent post-materialist concerns would be unlocked by the materialist key of greater autonomy which will require more research if and when the goals are achieved. The endurance of both parties suggests that they represent something deeper than simple protest vehicles. Voters may not have as definite an identity as the parties espouse but the SNP and the League can both be said to have tapped into something with which hundreds of thousands of voters identify

The next chapter will seek to answer the questions raised here and to provide the evidence that the movements of the late twentieth century under consideration within

the context of the European Union are qualitatively very different from those which traditionally have been analysed as nationalist movements.

**CHAPTER SIX -**  
**INSIDE THE PARTIES -**  
**A COMPARISON OF POLICIES AND RHETORICS**

**6.1 Thematic Overview**

This chapter will seek to build on the historical and sociological analysis already undertaken in Chapters Three, Four and Five. It aims to build up a thorough picture of the Scottish National Party and the Northern League through two main sources. These are an examination of party literature and pamphlets, accompanied by party pronouncements reported in the respective written media and the use of interviews conducted with party activists in both countries which will be supplemented by a continued use of the secondary data which has already been utilised in previous chapters. Rather than go through these sources one-by-one, the preferred approach will be a thematic one. The aim of this methodology is to provide evidence for some of the arguments which the previous chapters have raised.

Specifically the issues to be examined are : the arguments over constitutional end which can be discerned in both parties; the anti-centralism which is a cornerstone of their rhetoric; their favourable attitudes toward the European Union and the contradictions contained therein; their use of identity in presenting policies to the voters; their ideological fluidity and their lack of fit on the traditional left-right spectrum and the nature and rhetoric of their campaigns.

Whilst the broader societal setting of specific time and place will form the background to the concluding analysis in Chapters Seven and Eight, this chapter aims to show that these two areas have considerable overlap and that there is ground for comparison of the two parties. An initial analysis of the two parties under consideration may conclude that they differ greatly, the one being a centre-left party

aiming for independence, the other a rightist party seeking a federal Italian state. However this thesis contends that these interpretations are very simplistic, as the previous chapters have sought to show, and not indicative of the true situation which contains much similarity in motive, approach and it will be argued in aim.

Through an analysis of the sources outlined within a controlled triangulation structure<sup>268</sup>, it is hoped to provide evidence for the qualitative difference of these parties from both the traditional models of nationalism and also any distinct features which they possess when compared to their competitors within contemporary party systems. The penultimate chapter will then use this evidence to assess the strength of the claim to provide a new model of nationalism within the European Union, which, for the sake of distinction from previous theories, is best granted some degree of terminological distinctiveness.

By analysing two of the most explicit European, electoral variants of modern autonomist movements, we can begin to understand how salient a 'post-national' identity may be as a 'home' in the contemporary European Union. The general argument will continue to be informed by the fact that there can never be one definitive explanation of nationalisms and identities because these concepts can mean quite different things to different people at the same time and in the same 'imagined nation'.

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<sup>268</sup> For a full explanation of 'triangulation' see C. Hakim (1987) *op. cit.* pp.144-145 "the design of a research programme is much more solid if one can ensure that individual projects are selected with a view to ensuring that both micro-level and macro-level perspectives are covered - which means in practice that both large scale or national data will be required as well as more focused and intensive studies."



## **6.2 Sources Used**

What then will be the main empirical evidence used to assess the themes outlined? Much use has been made already of the substantial poll and survey data available on the sociological make-up of both parties' cohorts of supporters. It is hoped to gain a more specific snapshot of the activists of both parties, comparing and contrasting them to each other and also to the voters of both parties.

Another important element in gauging the onset of a new kind of politics is the position of the parties as held up by its politicians. This will be analysed by a close examination of both parties' literature and pamphlets since the 1980s. The British tradition of summing up all policy positions in a comprehensive election manifesto is not one which has been consistently pursued in Italy. Thus whilst the SNP's election manifestos for 1983, 1987 and 1992 general elections and the 1989 and 1994 European elections can be referred to, the League's policy pronouncements have tended to be on a slightly more ad hoc basis, though the publication of the party's own paper since 1984 provides a valuable resource and the various regional leagues have provided policy programmes which supplement those produced since the Northern League's formation in 1991. Close study will be made of the rationale behind any substantive changes in policy stance, for example the SNP's move from 'It's Scotland's Oil' in the 1970s to its 'Independence in Europe' stance of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the League's shift from a 'Republic of the North' to three confederal 'macroregions' and beyond to its 1996 stance with secession to the fore.

At least as important as the parties' own writings is the transfer of these messages to the public through the mass media, given that first-time voters or potential defectors from other parties are highly unlikely to have had access to party propaganda. McLuhan's famous phrase 'the medium is the message'<sup>269</sup> suggests that the means in

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<sup>269</sup> See M. McLuhan (1967) "The Medium is the Message".

which the content of a new party's programme is relayed through both electronic and print media can have a crucial effect on its likelihood of success. For parties such as the SNP and the League which are not at the centre of their dominant media and indeed may be viewed as challenges to an established system, this can create problems in even featuring on the agenda at times other than those of crisis. Scotland is, however, relatively well off with two indigenous quality dailies 'The Scotsman' and 'The Herald' which deal with both Scottish and British politics, and several TV programmes dedicated to Scottish news and political affairs. Italy is more centralised, with most of the quality press and television being national in coverage and the spectre of Silvio Berlusconi's ownership of the three main commercial channels and his placement of sympathisers in important positions on the public RAI channels looms large. However, most of the quality dailies carry extensive local supplements and with '*Corriere della Sera*' based in Milan and its rival Roman-based '*La Repubblica*' providing equally extensive coverage of the League. Several of these newspaper sources will be used in the course of this chapter.

### **6.3 Interviews with Party Activists**<sup>270</sup>

Twenty-eight interviews were conducted with activists in the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League. This number is obviously not enough to base statistical calculations on. The constraints imposed by money, time and most of all recalcitrance amongst SNP branch secretaries in responding to several enquiries meant that any large-scale interview process was impossible within the remit of a doctoral thesis. (The full frustrations and accompanying sense of achievement in conducting the interviews are summed up in the Interview Commentary section of Appendix I). However in the triangulation context outlined above, the data collected

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<sup>270</sup> The full text of the questions asked in the interviews appears in Appendix I of this thesis.

will be used to help the argument that despite the obvious differences between the two movements, many of those convinced enough of their arguments to get actively involved, have large similarities in motive and goal.

The interviews were tightly structured, so as to make comparisons between each group with two different languages and cultural settings easier. The interviews covered several different areas, thus :

- Basic information : Name, birthplace, age, occupation, when the respondent joined the party, when the interviewee became involved as an activist and whether he or she had ever been a member of any other political party.

- Motives for joining the party were explored by asking whether this decision had ever been questioned, whether they were pleased or not with the progress made during their membership, what their reaction in terms of continuing membership would have been if London or Rome had conceded more in the past, which areas they looked to for inspiration, what areas were seen as a prototype and if their party's demands were primarily economic.

- Identity and the myths surrounding it followed with the 'Moreno' five-choice question on identity being posed<sup>271</sup>, in what way (if any) their area was different from the rest of the country, whether any differences derived from a different identity, how long any distinctiveness had lasted and whether there was an ethnic element to it.

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<sup>271</sup> See L. Moreno (1986) "Decentralisation in Britain and Spain" pp.439-442. Moreno uses comparative data from Scottish and Catalan polls which ask the respondents to rate their belonging as x, not y; more x than y; equally x and y; more y than x or y, not x where x=sub-national identity and y= 'official' national identity.

- Methods and Goals were examined next with questions on the type of society being sought, what form autonomy would initially take, how they reacted to potential alliance with parties who were also competitors, how much influence the individual felt they had on party policy, whether the party had shifted its stance over time, how the individual would react to a devolved settlement and how unified the party was now, as compared to the past.

- International Environment provided the final topic with the interviewees quizzed on how they reacted to the criticism that their party's policies would mean being swallowed up and effectively replacing the disliked 'nation-states' with Brussels, how nationalism had changed since 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall, whether these changes had helped the party in question and finally whether the activist had heard of the SNP or the League. Also in this last section was a question on identity in which the interviewee had to mark themselves on a linear scale with the poles being the two identity choices previously given and the SNP activists were asked what they thought of Settler Watch, whilst the League activists were asked about their reaction to the regional reforms of the 1970s.

In general the interviews lasted between thirty and forty minutes, ranging from twenty minutes to one hour. Two pilot interviews were conducted in December 1994 in Scotland which led to a few questions being dropped as they were obviously going to be answered as part of other questions. The bulk of the fieldwork was then carried out in Scotland in Glasgow in March and Edinburgh in May and in Italy in July and August of 1995 in Vicenza, Verona and Brescia. In addition two further interviews with women were held in Edinburgh in October 1995 to correct a gender imbalance between the two groups - SNP women had to be actively sought out. One of the most frustrating aspects of the whole interview process was the degree of self-selection involved. At the outset SNP branches in Glasgow Govan, Aberdeen North, Peterhead

and Perth & Kinross were written to but only the first of these offered their co-operation and a contact in the SNP in Edinburgh then had to be used to arrange more interviews. The Northern League were much more co-operative - benefit deriving from the 'flattering factor' of a foreign student being interested enough to come to Italy and talk to them - and the only place which didn't reply was the Milanese League branch. Seven interviews were conducted in the Veneto (Verona and Vicenza) and seven in Lombardy (Brescia) to try and get a flavour of the diversity between these two regions under the Northern League's umbrella.

The twenty-eight interviews, while small in number, are an important part of the integrated research design. The intention is to use the interviews to illustrate points made based on secondary literature and data sources such as opinion polls or party literature. They comprise a snapshot of party sentiment during a particular year and any comments made on specific questions are intended not as definitive statements but rather as exploratory routes which may be followed up or left to be disproved by further research. Full transcriptions of the interviews were made - a time-consuming exercise but one which has been important to the analysis which follows.

Of the fourteen SNP respondents, eight were male and six were female and on the League side there were nine men and five women. The ages of the SNP activists ranged from 20 to 63, and for the League from 20 to 50.<sup>272</sup> As regards membership of other parties three SNP members had previously been in the Labour Party and two League activists had been members of the small Liberal Party, one of the discredited *pentapartito* coalition members through the 1980s and into the 1990s. Birthplaces tended to be where the activists now lived especially in Italy (showing loyalty first and foremost to the *commune* which several interviewees commented on), though one League activist actually came from the South which is interesting given some of

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<sup>272</sup> The median age of SNP members was 38 and that of the League was 34.

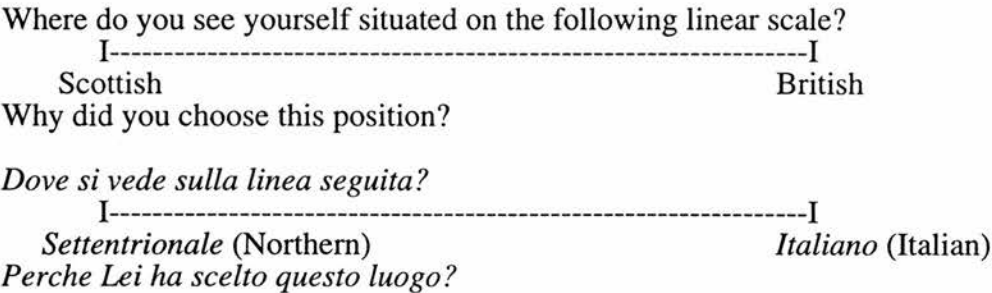


the claims made in the literature about the League's uncompromising, racist stance and another came from Argentina, the daughter of Italian and Scottish parents. The SNP had one activist born in South Africa, though again to expatriate parents. The occupations were fairly well matched with the SNP group comprising four students, two unemployed men, two retired people, one lecturer, one engineer, one security officer, one nurse, one printer and one teacher; whilst in the League there were also four students, two teachers, two entrepreneurs, one clerk, one doctor, one retired man (a railwayman who retired at forty-five after thirty years service providing a good example of why Italy is facing a pensions crisis), one local representative, one forest engineer and one research assistant.

One of the most interesting responses came in reply to the question on identity. Of the fourteen SNP activists all but one of them felt Scottish not British, and the sole dissenter had lived in London for twenty or so years but still felt more Scottish than British. On the League side nine of the fourteen interviewed felt Northern not Italian, one felt more Northern than Italian, three felt equally Northern as Italian and one gentleman insisted that neither description fitted him, he was instead a citizen of the *commune* of Brescia. Whilst fewer League members than SNP expressed the strongest identity choice, this still constituted a high proportion given the supposedly tenuous existence of any Northern identity and the comparative youth of the concept as compared to the Scottish identity and it is of considerable note that none of the 'Italians' interviewed gave preference to their 'official' national identity. As for the year of joining : the SNP stretches back to 1961 up to 1993, whilst the Northern League is much more recent with a span from 1990 up to 1993, although the median year is 1990 for the SNP and 1991 for the League. This cannot be held to be surprising given the different histories of the two parties, though the SNP had eight of its activists joining in the same time-frame as the League.

When it came to naming prototypes, the SNP activists were more forthcoming with four citing Norway, two Denmark, two Quebec and two Spain and there was one mention each for Iceland, Luxembourg, Austria, Canada, the USA and the Persian Gulf; the League supporters were less keen to name particular places many saying that they wanted to construct their own model but for those who did name a specific prototype Spain was most popular with three mentions and Switzerland's cantons had two with one for Belgium and one for Italy's own autonomous regions (these comprise the islands of Sardinia and Sicily and the bi-lingual border regions). Regarding whether the activists had heard of the other party in the present study, there was a fairly high degree of ignorance in the SNP of the League with six having no knowledge whilst two knew very little and only six having heard and having a coherent opinion of the League. The League supporters fared a little better with nine having heard of and having a cogent opinion on the SNP, two having heard something and only three with no knowledge. Finally the linear identity scale utilised in the interviews is shown below in Figure 6.1:

**Figure 6.1 : Linear Identity Scale used in Interviews with Party Activists**



This was used more as a check on the other Moreno-identity question than as a tool in itself, all but two of the SNP supporters put themselves very close to the Scottish pole with four actually at the extremity and one putting himself off the scale, the largest distance came from the one activist who described himself as more Scottish than British. For the Northern League six activists were at the Northern end, another

three very close to it, and three less than half way along and one at the Italian extremity (three of the latter four being those who had described themselves as equally Northern as Italian), the activist who described himself as Brescian, scored out 'Northern' and wrote in 'Brescian' to re-assert his point. The results of the two identity questions are thus a good check on each other and reveal the Scottishness of SNP activists as very firmly entrenched, whilst the Northern-ness of League supporters is a prominent feature and stronger than might have been anticipated from secondary sources.

This commentary is intended to provide a broad picture of the activists interviewed and some idea of their identities. Obviously we would expect activists to feel strongly in identity terms, and as the conduits of the party message they play an important part in the process of activating the electorate. Their responses to specific questions will be used along with the other data sources outlined as the rest of this chapter looks at the evidence for similarity or difference along the several different themes outlined in Section 6.1.

#### **6.4 To Devolve or not to Devolve**

One of the most contentious issues with which both parties have wrestled with is the exact type of autonomy which they seek. The specific controversy centres on the strength of the institutions and the types of power which they would possess under autonomy. This can broadly be characterised as independence or secession versus devolution or federalism. The former represents a severance of all governing links with the respective British and Italian states and the establishment of a new state with the presumption of membership of inter-governmental organisations, such as the European Union and the United Nations. The latter, in contrast, preserves the existing international situation, but changes the internal balance of governance by

devolving powers away from the centre, most commonly on domestic issues, such as health, education, transport, and more controversially, tax-raising autonomy and perhaps welfare provision. Typically a devolved settlement would leave foreign policy, defence policy, monetary policy and the issue of notes and coins with the central authorities.

Why is this question of devolution versus independence such a controversial one in the parties under consideration? Surely one can simply examine party policy and so discover which side of the argument the Scottish National Party and the Northern League lie on? Unfortunately, these policy positions are far from clear or static. We have already mentioned the gradualist versus fundamentalist split in the SNP, and the Northern League, having favoured confederal devolution for a number of years, has from 1995 flirted with a more militant secessionist position. The Scottish situation is further complicated by the commitment of both the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats to a devolved Scottish Assembly through their membership of the Scottish Constitutional Convention. Even the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party has recently claimed to be devolving power through the re-vamping of the Grand Committee structure.

The Scottish National Party's stated goal is one of independence from the current British state - its 1992 general election manifesto's title page bore the clarion call 'Independence in Europe - Make it Happen Now!' <sup>273</sup>. However, as soon as one delves below the surface, the picture becomes less clear. For instance in the application for membership issued by the North Charlotte Street headquarters, the aims of the Scottish National Party are stated as :

“ a) Self-Government for Scotland - that is the restoration of Scottish National sovereignty by the establishment of a democratic Scottish Parliament within the Commonwealth, freely elected by the Scottish people.

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<sup>273</sup> Scottish National Party (1992a), 'Independence in Europe - Make it Happen Now'.

b) The furtherance of all Scottish interests.”<sup>274</sup>

When this is compared to the opening statement of the Constitutional Convention’s case for change in its flagship document which says that “the first and greatest reason for creating a Scottish Parliament is that the people of Scotland want and deserve democracy”<sup>275</sup>, there is clearly a considerable overlap, with the question of how ‘self-government’ is defined to the fore. As the section below on the SNP’s attitude to Europe will highlight, at least some of the difference in their stance is merely rhetorical, stemming from the need to appear electorally distinct, when the basic beliefs are similar.

It is this closeness in core beliefs concerning Scotland’s distinctiveness and its democratic right to a parliament which also causes much of the intra-SNP friction between those who want full independence and nothing less, and those who see a devolved parliament as a logical, or at least necessary, step on the road to ultimate separation. The SNP’s student wing, the Federation of Student Nationalists (FSN), makes its fundamentalist credentials perfectly clear in its 1993/1994 handbook :

“The FSN is confident that Independence in Europe would win a multi-option referendum. With over 75% voting for change in Scotland at the last general election, the outcome would be unlikely to support the status quo, moreover a majority of those supporting devolution believe it would soon lead to independence. We believe however that devolution offers no solution to the problems faced by Scotland today. Devolution is seen by many as offering a stepping stone to Independence, however it could simply be a delaying tactic offered by the British parties to appease the people of Scotland.”<sup>276</sup>

However, inherent in this statement is the admission that there are considerable numbers who do see devolution as a ‘stepping-stone’ toward independence. Importantly the current SNP leadership, under Alex Salmond, seems to lie firmly within this latter camp. Much was made of remarks he made in the build-up to the

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<sup>274</sup> Scottish National Party ‘Application for Membership’.

<sup>275</sup> Scottish Constitutional Convention (1995) ‘Scotland’s Parliament, Scotland’s Right’.

<sup>276</sup> Scottish National Party (1993b) ‘Federation of Student Nationalists Members Handbook 1993/94’.



1995 SNP conference, in which he incurred the wrath of anti-devolution nationalists by saying :

“...we’re being pragmatic about political developments. Far better than the total domination of pragmatism of the Seventies or the other extreme which would be to say it’s that (independence) and that alone, nothing else will do at any time whatsoever. I actually think that (devolution) would be a good opportunity - not the best way to get independence perhaps, but a perfectly legitimate development - to get to independence through devolution; it’s a perfectly valid way.”<sup>277</sup>

Salmond predicted that in a devolved Scottish parliament, the Labour Party would split between its unionist and nationalist wings and that the latter would be free to join with the SNP. However his position is not one which is unequivocally accepted, with the SNP executive member Iain Lawson saying : “A great many people in the Scottish National Party will be astonished that Alex Salmond is prepared to work with people in the Labour Party rather than life-long nationalists...he should hang his head in shame.” <sup>278</sup> The split was publicly aired at the 1995 party conference when Margaret Ewing MP claimed that if the SNP didn’t participate in Scottish Assembly elections by carrying on its boycott of all things related to the Constitutional Convention, independence may have to wait upward of fifty years, thus :

“..let’s use any bridge that’s there. People who say we shouldn’t be looking at the possibility of standing for an assembly - what is their alternative ? - are we just going to wait for the big bang theory in another fifty years?” <sup>279</sup>

Again Iain Lawson spoke out against this gradualist leadership line, saying that “The grassroots of this party believe in independence and it is about time the leadership started to recognise that.” <sup>280</sup> The evidence is clear then that the constitutional end of the SNP, or at least the equally important means of reaching that end, is by no means a clearly agreed one at the leadership level. What though of Lawson’s grassroots and the electorate in general?

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<sup>277</sup> “Salmond shuns ‘the pure way’” [*The Scotsman*, 20/9/95] p. 5.

<sup>278</sup> “SNP critics round on Salmond over offer to Labour” [*The Scotsman*, 25/9/95] p.1.

<sup>279</sup> “Ewing opens up split over home rule” [*The Scotsman*, 22/9/95] p.1.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

The poll evidence shows a very confused picture as regards attitudes to devolution and independence. As the data cited in Chapter 5 has shown the SNP does not have a monopoly of those Scots who state independence as their preferred constitutional option and, indeed, a significant minority of their own supporters favour devolution or the status quo. The Scottish Election Survey of 1992 contained a majority for the option of staying within the UK with a devolved assembly, as Table 6.1 makes clear:

**Table 6.1<sup>281</sup>**  
**Attitudes to Constitutional Reform in Scottish Election Survey**

Scotland...	%
In UK, with Assembly	50
No change from Status Quo	24
Independent within EC	17
Independent outwith EC	6
Other	1
Don't Know	2
N=957	100

The devolution option was then chosen by 50% of respondents, in a survey which is commonly seen as having more credibility than other polls. Second behind it was no constitutional change which had 24% support, and only third came independence in Europe with 17%, although if added to independence outwith the European Union which gained 6% support, independence would have 23%, giving a neat trichotomy in which half of the electors surveyed favoured devolution, one quarter the status quo and the remaining quarter independence. The gradualists then can be said to be playing a pragmatic game in accepting the dominant preference of the Scottish electorate, which under devolution they would then seek to radicalise.

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<sup>281</sup> These figures are taken from the author's own analysis of the 1992 Scottish Election Survey (SES) processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data set was provided along with variables and cases by Paula Surridge, one of the participants in the SES. These responses are from Q60a 'Respondent's view on Scottish Assembly'. There are 957 cases in the Scottish Election Survey.

How do the activists interviewed relate to this debate? Amongst them there was also no agreement as to a clear position, with such replies to the question on devolution as:

“I’d love it when devolution comes if it ever does because if it’s not given it’s a great reason to pressurise the British system if it’s not been delivered, if it does come it would be in the middle of a Labour government which means we’d probably do well and it would greatly help to legitimise the SNP as an active political party because we would actually be working for tangible political change within a Scottish forum - we could say why not bring all things into a Scottish forum.”.

A statement which contrasts markedly with the following attitude :

“..see Scotland United and things like that they’re a nonsense. The SNP was born out of the fact that these things never worked in the past, there’s always been home-rule associations, ..but at the end of the day it never worked because there wasn’t a platform, a party - the constitutional convention, that’ll fail as well because there’s not a party whose *raison d’etre* or principal aim is to achieve that. They’ve all got British agendas.”

Thus it seems that there are real differences of opinion within the SNP. These ultimately centre around the means of independence, rather than the goal itself, although there is substantial poll evidence that many SNP supporters would be happy with devolution (as reported in Chapter Five) and this sentiment finds echo even among some activists with the proviso that the parties work together, thus :

“In the future I believe the best form of government is consensus government, a coalition type of government,...I remember talking to somebody outside a polling station a couple of years ago who was from the Labour Party and everything he said that he wanted for Scotland, I wanted for Scotland but I believed it would come from independence and he believed it would come through devolution, so that’s your normal Labour activist.”

We can discern then that there is no unity over short-term constitutional end amongst leadership, activists or voters, only rhetorical unity over a vague, long-term need for independence, which as Section 6.6 will show is compromised by immediately concomitant membership of the European Union.

What then of the Northern League and its constitutional position? Like the SNP the League’s position is not as clearly defined as some commentators would like to suggest. Broadly it has come to be seen as a party within the Italian federalising tradition, a perception built on its constitutional proposal for three macro-regions

which was its main policy when it came to prominence in the 1992 Italian general election.<sup>282</sup> However, beneath this surface there has been considerable debate as to the competencies of the various echelons of government. In this context the first programme of the Lombard League makes interesting reading with its first article calling for “self-government for Lombardy”<sup>283</sup>. Indeed some have argued for outright independence from the Italian state, a line which has been fuelled since the League withdrew its participation in Berlusconi’s seven-month long administration in 1994 and so precipitated Lamberto Dini’s technocratic government and which has certainly been tentatively embraced in the call for secession in 1996 because reform has failed to come from the centre.

One consistent theme in the League’s constitutional argument is the claim that the arrangements made after the *Risorgimento* did not serve the North well at all, in creating a bias toward centralism which continued from the pre-First World War Liberal period, through fascism, and into the First Republic after the Second World War. To this end the arguments of the federalist Carlo Cattaneo are proffered as an alternative at the time of unification which was ignored in favour of Piedmontese centralisation.<sup>284</sup> The idea of making up for this historical error and all the negative consequences which can be associated with it is captured in one of the League’s posters<sup>285</sup>, thus :

“The Second Risorgimento. Against the mafia and its parties. A federal state.  
North - Central - South.”<sup>286</sup>

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282 See Z. Ciuffoletti (1994) “Federalismo e Regionalismo : Da Cattaneo alla Lega”.

283 Lega Nord (1993) op. cit. Bossi - ‘Il Pensiero’ p.24.

284 See U. Bossi & D. Vimercati (1993) “La Rivoluzione - La Lega : Storia e Idee” pp.27-29.

285 It should be noted that the Italian streetscape provides much more overt political propaganda than the average Scottish urban landscape - political posters are a prominent part of Italian parties’ communication and in this thesis the sentiments expressed on League posters are treated as comparable to those in SNP pamphlets and leaflets - indeed arguably they are more widespread reaching a much larger audience.

286 Lombard League/Northern League poster displayed in L. Costantini (1994) “Dentro La Lega - Come Nasce, Come Cresce, Come Comunica” p.194 Fig.5.

The actual competencies envisaged under the so-called macro-regions proposal involved only foreign policy, defence, law codification, telecommunications and the minting of money being left at the confederal Italian level. The rest of the government's tasks would be devolved down to the regions and the three macro-regions. The former would control local police, agriculture, public works, the administration of justice, taxes, health, social welfare, education (including universities) and planning regulations; the macro-regions would be in charge of industry and commerce, transport, civil and penal codes, taxes, scientific research, citizenship, co-ordinating policing and foreign trade.<sup>287</sup> It is interesting to note that of the powers left at the centre under these institutional proposals, most could theoretically be ceded to the European Union - if qualified majority voting is extended into the security/foreign policy and home affairs/justice pillars of community affairs, as is being discussed by the IGC which started in March 1996 and is due to conclude in 1997 or 1998. Both the League and Italians in general favour participation in monetary union, whilst by the Treaty of Rome Italian law (like those of other member states) is already subservient to European law in many areas. Moreover, the European Commission is seeking to create a more homogeneous European telecommunications system, leaving it very unclear exactly what competencies a national government would retain.

However the rhetoric used in arguing the case for the above institutional division illustrates the very thin line between different types of constitutional end. Whilst three macro-regions were being sought by the League and it made tentative attempts to set up like-minded organisations in the centre and the south of Italy, it was the concept of the Republic of the North which grabbed the headlines after Bossi first mentioned it in an interview with *'Il Giornale'* on 31st August 1990. The reason for

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<sup>287</sup> Lega Nord (1992) 'Progetto Istituzionale della Lega Nord per una Repubblica Confederale'.



this was the overtones which were associated with the proposal, one made clear in the following poster proclamation:

“The Republic of the North is the road away from Rome. If there is not autonomy, there will be a struggle for self-determination for the North.”<sup>288</sup>

This inherent tension between simple devolution and a more Wilsonian degree of self-determination has become a more obvious one since the fall of the Berlusconi government in December 1994 and the manifest failure of seven months of government to deliver any kind of federal settlement, despite the League holding the portfolio for institutional reform and the Interior Ministry. The promised fight for self-determination was begun with the ‘recall’ parliament of the North which was launched by the League in Mantua in the summer of 1995 using the sixteenth century *Villa Berni* as its seat. At its first meeting Bossi raised the possibility of secession if that was what the people of the North wanted, using a phraseology very reminiscent of Scottish National Party rhetoric, thus:

“It is the turn of the people to decide what type of capital Mantua will be. Whether it is the capital of a federal state or something more, the capital of an independent state. The North is by now activated and is moving to see in the form of a referendum if the people want autonomy for the North or not.”<sup>289</sup>

Further evidence for the thin dividing line comes in the opinions expressed regarding the concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘state’. Franco Rocchetta, the leader of the Venetian League from the 1970s until the early 1990s (when he was ousted and replaced with the Bossi ally, Fabrizio Comencini) is very clear on his view, that :

“Those which officially, in administrative language are called regions, are in reality nations, they signify peoples endowed with cultural, linguistic, social, economic, administrative and institutional coherence. I want to be clear, for us the Veneto, equal to Lombardy, Tuscany, Sicily, is a nation with the same rights as Denmark, France, Poland, Greece and Holland.”<sup>290</sup>

This is a perception reinforced by Bossi during the opening salvos of the 1994 election campaign. When talking of Italy and comparing himself to Berlusconi and

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<sup>288</sup> L. Costantini (1994) op. cit. p.194 Fig.7.

<sup>289</sup> ‘Bossi rilancia la sfida - Pronti alla secessione’ [*La Repubblica*, 25/7/95] p.12.

<sup>290</sup> I. Diamanti (1993) op. cit. ‘La Lega’ p.52.

Finì he said “I am talking about a state [Italy], they are talking of a nation [Italy].”<sup>291</sup> For many beyond Bossi and Rocchetta, Italy is no more than a state, with their ‘imagined nation’ residing in the north, or more commonly one of its constituent parts.

These sentiments are also mirrored in the interviews conducted with League activists. For example “..in Italy there is not a unitary history, instead there are many different histories and we live in a region which has had a unique history for many, many centuries.” And more specifically on the constitutional end sought:

“I would like to see a North that is independent, or at the very least confederal to let the North realise its full potential which at the moment is too bound by institutional mechanisms, too constrained...the independent North would be all the North down to Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany and no more.”

Whilst the relative modernity of the Italian state is captured thus :

“I believe that the term Italian debases the many zones of Italy...in my opinion with the passing of years we have approached each other with the mass media and information flows but there are profound differences which derive from the fact that at the historical level, Italy is a very recently united state, there is profound diversity.”

This debate is reflected amongst the population at large, where there is evidence for considerable demand for some type of devolution and beyond as Table 5.2 made clear, reproduced below as Table 6.2 for ease of reference:

**Table 6.2<sup>292</sup>**  
**Attitudes to different types of Institutional Reform**

	Northerners	'Leghisti'	'Lombardi'	'Veneti'
Status Quo	14	6	11	0
More Powers to Regions	39	30	46	9
All Regions Special Statute	29	27	15	41
Three Macroregions	12	24	21	29
Separation for the North	7	13	7	21
	N= 660	145	78	67

<sup>291</sup> 'Bossi, Siluro a Berlusconi' [*La Repubblica*, 1/2/94] p.13.

<sup>292</sup> Figures taken from Poster Institute Survey as quoted in Diamanti (1993) op. cit. p.101.

These figures show very little satisfaction with the status quo and a solid majority behind regional devolution, be it a strengthening of current arrangements or a move to give all regions the considerable devolved powers which the five special-statute regions currently enjoy. Beyond this there is a minority who favour the League's macro-regions proposal and a smaller number who desire complete separation for the North. As one would expect these sentiments radicalise when one looks only at League supporters, with a significant difference between Lombard and Venetian feeling, the latter displaying more proclivity to more drastic change. What they illustrate is that the Italian constitutional picture is also a messy one with many different demands and options, mirroring the Scottish situation.

Thus whilst the dominant argument of the League has been toward a confederal devolution, there have always been substantial undercurrents toward a more complete secession which have resurfaced spectacularly in 1996. The headline differences between the nationalist SNP and the federalist League are not nearly as clear-cut as simple analysis might suggest, particularly when attitudes to the European Union are added into the equation in Section 6.6 below. This blurring of ends and the substantial overlap of means provide support for the thesis being developed, namely the presence in contemporary Europe of a very different form of nationalism to the traditional form seen in that continent.

### **6.5 All Roads Don't Lead to Rome (or London)**

A key plank of both the Scottish National Party's and the Northern League's political attack is the centralism to be found in the respective capitals, Rome and London. In the Italian case this goes further in accusations of corruption which can be said to be very real in the sense that so many leading political figures of the First Republic have been charged with varying degrees of criminal involvement during the *tangentopoli*

investigations of the last few years. In the British context, the accusations aren't so violent; they focus rather on the perceived south-east centricity of the anachronistic Westminster parliament and its institutional inability to serve the Scottish interest. This section will assess to what extent this anti-centralism pervades the different party echelons.

Such anti-central sentiment is well captured in a series of SNP flyers designed to increase membership, all carrying the slogan "Independence Works - Britain's Finished". In one of these leaflets under a block heading, listing countries which Scotland could aspire to be similar to, namely Denmark, Belgium, Switzerland, Eire, Portugal, Finland, Austria, Sweden, Norway and Holland, the text continues :

"Scotland's a rich country in people and resources - but Westminster prefers to see Scots on the dole. London is denying Scotland better jobs, improved hospitals, a first-class education system, higher pensions and new chances for our young people. We're not being saved by the Union - it's destroying us! Over the next five years Scotland will lose £18 billion in economic growth because we don't have a Scottish Parliament. New jobs. Improved hospitals. Better education services. Expanded healthcare. All denied Scotland by a London Government. Independence works - Britain's finished." <sup>293</sup>

This sentiment is by no means a new one, indeed it has been one of the linking threads in the SNP's volatile electoral history. Thus the 1987 manifesto states that :

"The North/South divide is really a Scotland/England divide. Never before have our two countries moved so far and so decisively apart. As England's unemployment falls by leaps and bounds, the Scottish totals hardly budge. As poverty is reduced in England, the crisis in Scotland becomes graver. As the English economy booms, Scotland stagnates...In 1974 the election of a strong group of SNP MPs forced London to pay attention to Scotland. In 1987 more SNP MPs elected will magnify the voice of Scotland both at Westminster, and at home. This is the time to make the break and to vote decisively for self-government. The British system has failed Scotland - it's time to Play the Scottish Card." <sup>294</sup>

Implicit in this passage is a generalising of the anti-centralism, a synecdoche in which the whole and the part become intertwined with London and England used to represent the same concept, which is very similar to the League's rhetoric versus

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<sup>293</sup> Scottish National Party (1994a) 'Independence Works - Britain's Finished'.

<sup>294</sup> Scottish National Party (1987) 'Play the Scottish Card - SNP General Election Manifesto 1987' p.5.

Rome and the South, as the second part of this section will show. This overwhelming notion of Scottish distinctiveness and repugnance at the thought of the Westminster system is captured in the SNP's 1995 flagship policy document 'Citizens not Subjects'. In its summary of proposals it is stated that the Scottish parliament will consist of a single chamber because "The notion of a revising chamber with a membership present by accident of birth or by political patronage is deeply repugnant to the Scottish sense of democracy."<sup>295</sup>

Are these senses of distinctiveness and anti-centralism shared by the activists and the electors at large? Certainly London and Westminster receive considerable stick amongst SNP activists, thus : "...the identity of Scotland is entirely different from the likes of London or Westminster...this forcing the British state, the Empire's dead - even during the Empire it was pushed on us." or "it sounds a good thing [the EU] but if it would actually work I don't know...it might be as corrupt as Westminster" and more generally England is seen as the source of most problems : "Britain to me is England, I don't think that Britain is, as people maintain, a union of Scotland, England, Wales and a part of Ireland, it's just England controls." As for evidence amongst the voters, the oft-cited statistic that three out of four Scots who voted in 1992, voted for some form of decentralisation and diminution of the centre's powers, provides substantial evidence of a widespread antipathy toward the governing 'state' centre.

Thus there is substantial evidence for an anti-centralism which seems to stem from the almost universal feeling of Scottish distinctiveness and the perceived lack of ability of the central Westminster parliament to contend adequately with the different needs and aspirations. What of the Northern Italian situation?

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<sup>295</sup> Scottish National Party (1995) 'Citizens not Subjects - The Parliament and Constitution of an Independent Scotland' p.2.



No-one with even a passing knowledge of the League and its history could fail to sense the vitriol which it directs toward Rome and the central institutions of the Italian state. Indeed much of the genesis of the various leagues and their coming together in the umbrella Northern League group can be seen as stemming from the failures of the centralised state in dealing with the differential demands of Italy's regions. This anti-centralism pervades much of the League's literature and policy pronouncements.

One of the League's most famous posters depicted a hen perched atop the Italian peninsula laying golden eggs which then disappeared down a funnel to be collected in a basket by a portly woman in stereotypical Southern dress straddling the peninsula from Rome southward, and the hen is saying 'For you who are ready to accuse us of racism' with the blurb running:

"The Lombard hen serves up golden eggs for Rome and beyond! All of them remain frying in their frying-pan and none return to us any more!"<sup>296</sup>

Other League posters are littered with similar sentiments, such as "A Free North - No centralised state and No Southern hegemony"<sup>297</sup> or "No! To Rome and its Mafias. The North is already at war! The Northern League is Liberty"<sup>298</sup>. A central plank in the argument against Roman centrality is the taxation issue, the League constantly makes reference to the relative GDP's of the Italian state's different regions, which taking Italy as 100 in 1994, shows the North-West to be 123.4, the North-East standing at 119.6, the Centre as 109.1 and the South very far behind on only 68.5.<sup>299</sup> The political capital to be made of these figures is helped by the much-resented redistribution of taxes from North to South through various structural funds, as

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<sup>296</sup> L. Costantini (1994) op. cit. p. 192 Fig.1.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid. p.193 Fig.3.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid. p.194 Fig.6.

<sup>299</sup> 'Nord-Est, il 'giallo' del boom' [*La Repubblica*, 17/7/95] p.3.

highlighted in another League poster: "The North pays for everything. Enough of taxes to Rome! Equal taxes - spent in Lombardy!"<sup>300</sup>

This anti-Roman attitude among voters was shown by the mass desertion of the traditional parties at the 1994 elections and the ridicule in which the central government is generally held. It is a feeling which the League capitalises on in the North and was one of the most common features in interviews with League activists, thus :

"I'd like to see a North that is more free in the sense that we don't always have to ask Rome when we want to do something I'd like to see a federal state where local autonomy is strong...in which the people could decide if they remained federated and so the mayor would have power and wouldn't have to go to Rome for money"

or on similar lines:

"I do not understand the administrative way of Rome - I believe one centre of power in an Italy so diverse cannot respond and solve problems in an Italy that is very different - they either have to go to the North or to the South, they can't respond to everyone with one central decision-making process, they can't respond to diversity."

and on giving their reason for joining

"I understood that the attitude of the League was anti-state, which was inevitably married to anti-centralism...I believe that Rome will never act, Rome will never suffer, we need to go outside Rome in the North for real change."

Both parties then infuse their message with a pervasive anti-centralism. Both rhetorical and substantive attacks are common against Rome and London, which are used as the symbols of central misgovernment. Moreover both argue that their societies would be better and richer under their autonomy programmes, freed from the draining burdens imposed by the reviled centres and so the anti-centralism of both parties can be said to rest on fundamentally materialist concerns, backing up the contentions of Chapter Five.

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<sup>300</sup> As illustrated in 'Il Calendario del Popolo' (1994) - 'Lega Nord : Federalismo o Secessione' p. 19.

## **6.6 European Unionists?**

One of the key theoretical elements mentioned in Chapter Two was the context which the European Union provided to aspiring autonomists in late twentieth century Western Europe. It was argued that the development of the European Community into the European Union and the growing integration of the various pillars of community government (the 'acquis communautaire', foreign and security policy and home affairs/justice policy), created an environment in which a member-state had less control over the traditional auspices of government. One can assume that traditional nationalists would shun the type of supranational accords which would rob a nascent nation-state of its hard-won autonomies, practically the day after they had been won, since control and exercise of the various spheres of government was part of the very definition of that type of nationalism.

Certainly the SNP in the early 1980s held such a view of the then European Economic Community, as outlined in their 1983 election manifesto :

“Whilst seeking co-operation with our European neighbours, we would not wish to join the Common Market (EEC), since the EEC has been extremely damaging to many of Scotland’s interests and its centralist thinking from Brussels is as ill-suited for Scotland as that from London.”<sup>301</sup>

Thus the Scottish National Party very much wanted to go it alone, proposing “a trading association with the EEC, similar to those of Austria (an EU member since 1995) and Norway”<sup>302</sup> and reserving all domestic policy areas to the newly-free Scottish nation - very much the stance one would expect of a traditional nationalist party. However only four years later the very same section of the manifesto told a very different story :

“(The SNP will) recommend membership of the European Economic Community in a referendum of the Scottish electorate, providing guarantees of protection for vital Scottish interests, particularly in relation to

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<sup>301</sup> Scottish National Party (1983) ‘Choose Scotland - The Challenge of Independence, SNP Manifesto 1983’ p.11.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

agriculture, industry, fishing, oil and steel, can be obtained. Independent representation in the EEC would allow Scotland to make a greater contribution to European affairs, by having a seat and a vote at the negotiating table, a place on the European Commission and greater representation in the European parliament. As an appendage of London, Scotland is denied all this.”<sup>303</sup>

Thus there was clearly a major qualitative change of policy stance toward European Community membership in the mid-1980s. However, at this stage, the SNP could still claim to adhere to a very Gaullist conception of a Europe of the nation-states saying explicitly “We would oppose moves for further centralisation in the EEC to create a European super-state.”<sup>304</sup> In nationalist terms one could argue that with the launch of the Single European Market package in 1985, that a trading association was no longer enough and rational national self-interest demanded membership of the Community but in no way were moves to any centralised decision-making to be supported.

However by 1989 and the European elections, this policy had been mitigated once more. Under the new slogan ‘Independence in Europe’, coined by the SNP’s star recruit from the Labour Party, Jim Sillars<sup>305</sup>, the party’s position had softened once again, thus:

“Europe is now affecting more and more of our lives. The Channel Tunnel and the Single European Act make it essential that Scotland has a voice at the top table of Europe defending our interests and taking full advantage of the opportunities for Scotland within the European Community. Our vision of the European Community is one of a confederal family of nations working together to improve the quality of life of its constituent peoples. We reject the concept of a centralised United States of Europe but accept that, as the Community develops, there will be a voluntary pooling of

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<sup>303</sup> Scottish National Party (1987) op. cit. p. 9.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> See the final chapter, entitled ‘Scotland Within Europe - The Framework for Independence’, of Sillars’ book in which the author makes very clear the type of independence he envisages “If, however, the SNP makes its target independence within the European Community and does so without ambiguity, then it is we who are backed by the solid advantages of political and economic logic, and the unionists who are left flat-footed. With an independent Scotland within the Community, the charge of separatism disappears. By definition, one nation or state cannot be separate from others while being a partner in a customs union.” Jim Sillars (1986) “Scotland - The Case for Optimism” It is interesting to note how this European-ness has outlived its author’s active political life within the SNP.

sovereignty by member states on specific issues.”<sup>306</sup>

As for democracy in Europe, the penultimate part of the manifesto lays out a design for a greatly strengthened European Parliament, with a much greater control over finances and significantly the power to initiate policy - a right which is viewed as anathema by those who want to retain nation-state dominance by keeping the inter-governmental Council of Ministers and, by implication, national parliaments as the key institution in the European matrix.

The areas to be ‘voluntarily pooled’ were given substance during the period of intense political debate on the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s. In a policy document prepared by the SNP’s Research Department, the strength of the SNP’s conversion to the European ideal is shown in its clear positioning in the debate on treaty ratification:

“As a party in favour of European co-operation the SNP supports the Treaty - despite its imperfections. The UK’s opt-out from the Social Chapter is one such defect which an independent Scotland will be able to reverse.”<sup>307</sup>

Furthermore the same document saw the SNP pledge a degree of supranational co-operation which few traditional nationalists would ever countenance, in voluntarily giving up some levers of economic power, thus:

“The SNP recognises the validity of the concept of a single currency, provided that it is agreed unanimously and that it only develops after convergence on a range of economic and social indicators. On the same basis, we also support the creation of a European Central bank - EuroFed - independent of political institution, all or part of which we have argued should be in Edinburgh.”<sup>308</sup>

The rhetoric here sounds more like that of the German Christian Democrats or the French Socialist Party, both Europhiles, rather than a party intent on flexing its own national muscles.

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<sup>306</sup> Scottish National Party (1989) ‘Scotland’s Future - Independence In Europe’ SNP Manifesto, European Elections 15/6/89.

<sup>307</sup> Scottish National Party (1992c) ‘The Maastricht Treaty - the SNP’s View’ p.1.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid. p.2.



This commitment to economic and social convergence and hence to a lack of autonomous policy control, is re-affirmed in the SNP's St. Andrew's Day document of 1995, showing that these positions are no snap reaction to an isolated debate. Indeed this latter document adds the realm of defence and foreign policy to those areas in which the SNP is willing to pool resources, thus :

“Scotland will participate fully in the structures of the European Union and will wish to work with other states to develop a European perspective on international peace-keeping through the Western European Union (and)...as a successor state to the United Kingdom, Scotland will inherit a continuing membership of NATO and of many other international bodies.”<sup>309</sup>

The SNP is committed to withdrawing an independent Scotland from the NATO command structure and forbidding the stationing of nuclear weapons on Scottish soil, thus making it more reliant on co-operation for its 'national' defence. A 1996 report by the Euro-MP, Allan Macartney, and the party's policy vice-convenor, Alex Neil, to the SNP's national assembly recommended that the end of national vetoes over foreign and security policy in Europe be endorsed. In the document the SNP is urged to support the extension of qualified majority voting (QMV) into the foreign and security pillar of community affairs. Such support for QMV represents a position which can hardly be said to support national sovereignty, which would involve the preservation of the national veto across as many policy areas as possible. Indeed in commenting on the current need for unanimity on such issues in the Council of Ministers, the authors say :

“Although this position protects national sovereignty, it also slows down the process of foreign policy-making, with the result that the Union is slow to respond to a crisis. The example of the council's slow and inadequate response to events in the former Yugoslavia provides a grave illustration of the problem.”<sup>310</sup>

There is no doubt that the Scottish National Party has moved in under a decade from being a Europhobic party to being much more of a Europhile. The very fact that the 1992 manifesto was entitled 'Independence in Europe - Make it Happen Now!'

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<sup>309</sup> Scottish National Party (1995) op. cit. p.15.

<sup>310</sup> 'SNP in new pro-Euro move' [*The Scotsman*, 3/2/96] p.4.

where previous manifestos had always had some mention of Scotland in their title, is a sign of the extent of the change. In the context of this thesis the shift is a very significant one, given its implications for the powers at the disposal of an autonomous European Union nation-state. How much has this wholesale change at the party elite level been mirrored amongst their own activists and more broadly in the electorate?

Amongst activists there is considerable disagreement as to whether or not to welcome membership of the European Union and its undoubted effects on Scotland's sovereignty, thus:

"if we're talking about an independent Scotland then yes I think obviously the nature of the EU basket of powers diminishes the degree of autonomy that independence represents and even the fact that the SNP is now talking positively about support for a common monetary policy is a big step away from the notion that the advantages of full independence were gaining control of these economic levers to use more effectively in the Scottish context."

or in a similar vein

"..it's not shackles, it's partnership in Brussels, whereas what we've got in London is we're the underdog, we don't get that seat at the table, we don't get proper negotiation rights. It's an entirely different thing, being part of a team is different from being part of a chain-gang."

Favourable statements which contrast with more sceptical comments such as

"I think that instead of trying to force everybody into the same box and make us into the same we should be pleased at the differences, ..instead of saying that because everybody's got a washing machine, Europe over, that means the whole culture has to be the same...the federal ideal would be a superstate trying to create an identity for itself, rather than respecting individual identities that make it up, I believe in a European confederation based on the nation-state...no subsidiarity because that implies that you're getting devolved power, that they're the centre and that they're devolving something...we should see the nations as the centre of Europe, rather than a federalist centre."

In short there seems to exist at least a healthy scepticism toward anything above inter-governmental co-operation, the feeling that whilst Scotland should be in the European variety of Union to have the fabled 'seat at the table', there must be no rush toward policy convergence. This kind of attitude seems to be reflected in public

opinion with a fair degree of ambivalence toward Europe as summarised in a January 1995 System Three poll summarised in Table 6.3 below:

**Table 6.3<sup>311</sup>**  
**Attitude Toward Membership of the European Union by Party Supported**

	Total.	Party Supported			
		Cons	Lab.	Lib. Dem.	SNP
N (Unweighted):	1053	99	510	80	201
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Stay an EU member	53	52	56	63	47
Leave EU	26	31	25	23	33
Undecided/Don't know	21	17	19	14	21

Thus whilst there is a clear majority of over half of the Scots interviewed who support continued membership of the EU, over a quarter are in favour of immediate exit, with one-fifth being undecided. It is interesting given the SNP's shift on its European attitude that its supporters are the only partisan affiliates to display less than 50% support for continued membership. Indeed one-third of SNP voters support the option of leaving the European Union, which represents a considerable gap with Labour and Liberal Democrat supporters with the Conservatives closest to the SNP on 31%. Clearly the SNP leadership has yet to win the hearts and minds of both activists and voters over to its European support and it is something of a paradox that the SNP is the most Europhile party in rhetorical terms but the most sceptical party when one looks at the bases of its support. One could argue that the change in attitude at the elite party level has yet to filter down to the bases of the party, although further research would be necessary to answer whether this stemmed from a sense of residual traditional nationalism amongst voters which belied the changes occurring at the leadership level or whether it is simply a process which will take time to permeate the whole party and the present dichotomy reflects the alacrity with which the party's stance has changed. The real acid test will come if and when

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<sup>311</sup> This table is taken a Herald/System Three poll on Europe conducted in January 1995 - 1,053 adults were interviewed at 40 sampling points across Scotland. (p.3).

Scotland does face the possibility of joining the EU as a separate entity - the internal dynamic of the SNP at such a time should provide the answers to these questions.

As for the League they too have a very positive attitude, at the leadership level, toward Europe, although the way in which the Union is used to attack other parties is different. The League's use of Europe is constrained by the much more positive attitudes to be found amongst the Italian populace toward Europe in general and further integration in particular, as illustrated by the Eurobarometer Trends from 1974-1994<sup>312</sup>. This context allows the League to play on the fact that whilst the North of Italy compares favourably in economic terms with any other region of Europe, Italy as a whole is economically disabled by the albatross of the Southern economy. This message is vividly illustrated by a League cartoon entitled 'The Mafia cancer' which depicts the Italian peninsula being ordered out of a door marked Europe with a bandage tied around its southern half and the words from within the door "Outside! Either you cure yourself of the infection or you carry out an amputation."<sup>313</sup> The persistent budgetary crisis with its implication that Italy has no chance of reaching the Maastricht convergence criteria, allows the League to point out how much better it would be for the North to be free and therefore able to take its rightful place at the core of Europe, blaming Italy's current economic woes firmly on the Southern millstone.

That Europe is seen as a good thing is illustrated by posters such as that produced by the Northern Alliance (1989-1991), the immediate forerunner to the Northern

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<sup>312</sup> Commission of the European Communities (1994) op. cit - responding to the question 'Generally speaking, do you think that your country's membership of the European Community/European Union is a good thing, a bad thing or neither good nor bad?', Italian approval of membership has never dropped below 63% (1976), reached a high of 83% in 1988 and in the most recent survey quoted from 1994 stood at 70%; the UK's 1994 figure was 43%, its high having been 57% in 1991 and its low a mere 21% in 1981.

<sup>313</sup> As shown in 'Il Calendario' (1994) op. cit. p. 53. For many commentators such a depiction typifies the League's anti-Southern stance, but they retort that they are commenting only on economic realities.

League, which said simply “The Northern Alliance, further from Rome, closer to Europe”<sup>314</sup> This was a theme carried on after the creation of the umbrella Northern League in 1991 with a poster which cleverly combined four key League messages by spelling out the letters of *LEGA* (League) to mean L=*Lavoro* (Work), E=*Europa* (Europe), G=*Giustizia* (Justice) and A=*Autonomia* (Autonomy) and then going on to say:

“Use your vote for a liberal and confederated North. The Northern League born from the fusion of the Lombard League, the Venetian League, the Piedmont League, the Ligurian League, the Emilian League, the Romagnan League, the Tuscan League, the Triestian League, the Friulian League and the Trentino League. Four hundred seats, seven hundred sections, two hundred thousand members. A great political organisation built by twelve years of honest and courageous work.”<sup>315</sup>

More substantive support for the European Union can be found in various League policy documents, for instance after the launch of the campaign for three macro-regions, their policy statements saw this a natural stepping-stone toward European integration, thus : “Economic legislation is the responsibility of the three macro-regions, the famous three macro-regions. A type of organisation which foreruns European integration.”<sup>316</sup> The idea of federal Europe, resting on subsidiarity, is one of the most constant planks of League policy, resoundingly endorsed thus by the Venetian League in 1995, which talked of:

“The role of a federal European Union, inspired by the principles of self-determination of peoples, self-government, liberty, equality,...united and, in some measure, inspired by the value of solidarity between the states which make it up, and determined to confront the challenges which face it, in the maintaining of the quality of life and the level of services offered to citizens.” <sup>317</sup>

Crucially the League sees the European Union as a successor to the traditional nation-state. Their preferred concept is one of strong localities - a Europe of the

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<sup>314</sup> L. Costantini (1994) op. cit. p.195 Fig.11.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid. p.196 Fig 12.

<sup>316</sup> ‘Ecco come la Lega Nord Vuole Governare l’Italia - Guida Ragionata al Nostro Programma’ as quoted in ‘*L’Europeo*’, No.46, December 1991

<sup>317</sup> Lega Nord (1995a) ‘Passaggio a Nord-Est - Economia e Società : Analisi, Progetti e Proposte’ p.16.



Regions - with the principle of subsidiarity applied and the residual functions carried out at a pan-European level - the traditional nation-state's powers effectively squeezed in a sub- and supra national pincer, as Bossi makes clear:

"There is a Europe that we like and a Europe that we don't like. The first is the Europe of small peoples, of small firms, of protected minorities, of cultural liberty, of cities and regions; the second is the Europe of strong nations, of armed centralism which survives federation...It would truly be a joke if the great dream of federalists - a unified continent - turned out in reality to reaffirm the principle opposed to that of autonomy : a monstrous centralism which is even further away and more uncontrollable than that of the hated capitals."<sup>318</sup>

This is a theme he continues throughout his writing, invoking the arguments of Carlo Cattaneo to lend an air of historical depth to League claims on Europe, thus:

"With the onset of the second millennium, the central state will die in Europe. The splintering of countries which seemed never-ending, the appearance on the map of new frontiers and the disappearance of old protagonists on the international scene, from the Soviet Union to Czechoslovakia, opens the way to new equilibriums, still to be decided. The European federation is being born, but its features are hidden. It is well to keep in mind the prophetic words of Carlo Cattaneo, the dramatic choice between 'Fortress Europe' and 'The United States of Europe'."<sup>319</sup>

Thus there is no doubt that the League is a pro-European party which is in favour of the extension of qualified majority voting into all pillars of the Union's life and foresees a federal model of an United Europe in which the old-style nation-state will very much wither away. However like the SNP, the League's activists seem somewhat less enthusiastic toward the European ideal with some scepticism as to how the battle against the centralised type of 'Fortress Europe' will be won, thus:

"For me it is absolutely vital that Brussels guarantees the representation of everyone in the sense that it can't become a large Rome and that they more or less accept a federal model, Brussels must not substitute Rome, or Paris, or London, even the smallest communities must be represented."

or on explicit policy choices which would have to be made:

"I am totally opposed to a Europe with monetary union, and political union, Europe as a free market and that's it, the freedom of trade is a good thing, but with all these laws, it's a bad thing, it's just an extra layer of laws, free trade is the maximum."

which complement criticisms of some actions already taken, thus:

"I think that's a very true criticism, I am very afraid of this Europe in which

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<sup>318</sup> Lega Nord (1993) op. cit. p.54.

<sup>319</sup> U. Bossi (1993) op. cit. p.208.

there have been certain mistakes, for instance the move to homogenise laws, Europe is a good example of centralisation.”

Thus similarly to the SNP future research should focus on this “European’ gap in the League in the sense of monitoring the differing attitudes of the League elite and the ‘rank and file’ over time. It would be interesting to pursue the notion of a split in supranational inclination between the ‘above’ and ‘below’ party cadres beyond the two parties under consideration here.

What though of League voters’ attitudes toward Europe? Some clue is given here by a further question in the 1993 Poster Institute Survey, which has already been used in looking at attitudes to territorial belonging and institutional reform. The interviewees were asked whether they had faith in different institutions and the results are summarised below in Table 6.4 :

**Table 6.4<sup>320</sup>**  
**Level of Trust Afforded to Different Institutions**

	All	‘Leghisti’	‘Lombardi’	‘Veneti’
European Community	55	50	49	51
Church	45	38	39	36
Legal System	44	39	37	42
Mass Media	29	37	41	32
Local Bodies	19	22	18	27
Parliament	13	8	6	10
Government	10	8	8	7
Political Parties	6	5	3	6
N=	660	145	76	66

Thus it can be seen that Europe is the most trusted institution both by Italians in general and to a slightly lesser extent by League supporters. The levels of faith involved stand in stark contrast to those afforded to the three central institutions, and as shown in the bottom three rows, League sympathisers hold the triad of parliament, government and political parties in particular contempt.

<sup>320</sup> I. Diamanti (1993) op. cit. p. 102 Table.11.

Europe then is portrayed as an escape route out of the mire of Italian or British domestic politics. Both parties use Europe as a political stick with which to beat the central nation-states, however the criticism that the consequences of membership have not been properly thought out may be levelled against them. Both are committed to policies which would compromise their autonomy and the European Union context can be seen as a vital factor in the type of nationalism which those within its auspices can pursue. The contrast between the SNP of the early 1980s and the mid 1990s provides a particularly sharp illustration of the distance which pro-European-ness sets between the parties under consideration and traditional nationalist parties which fought for state power in all policy spheres, providing further evidence for the contention of this thesis that these contemporary manifestations of autonomist sentiment represent a very different phenomenon to their European predecessors. However for both parties there is a question mark over the extent to which they have brought both their activists and voters with them in their Euro-enthusiasm and this is an area which could prove very important if either party were to get the chance to implement its policy promises with much room for potential conflict.

### **6.7 Use of Identity**

One of the key issues in deciphering late twentieth century autonomy movements is the extent to which the identity to be mobilised is pervasive across the social setting of the movement. The crucial divide here is between idealism and pragmatism, that is to what extent the identity in question is a true reflection of the collective imaginings of the area and to what extent it is used as a mobilising, politicised tool. This split is not a new one, for instance the divide between the liberal nationalist, Giuseppe Mazzini, and the realpolitik unifier, Count Camillo Cavour, in Italy's *Risorgimento* can be seen to operate along similar lines. The question to be examined

in this section is to what extent the identities which the parties lay claim to can be said to be long-standing or recently unearthed.

Intuitively the SNP seems on stronger ground here - its longer history, its place within a broader sense of Scottish nationalism and the poll evidence which suggests that the majority of Scots feel more Scottish than British all point to the existence of a Scottish identity which the previous chapters have provided evidence for both in the historical and the contemporary realm. With the Conservatives conversion to bringing government closer to the people with their innovation of a touring Scottish Grand Committee, the four political parties in Scotland are all, to a certain extent, playing on their Scottishness.

However, if anything the contested nature of Scottish political identity, means that the SNP seeks to pragmatically use its more explicit Scottishness for electoral advantage. For instance, one of the undisputed facts about the SNP's vote is that it is definitely skewed toward young age cohorts, as the data cited in Chapter Five confirmed. It is hardly surprising then that the party specifically targets young voters. It has two youth bodies - Young Scottish Nationalists (YSN) for those under twenty-six and the Federation of Student Nationalists (FSN) for those in further education. In addition the party has been committed since its 1987 manifesto (reaffirmed in the 1992 manifesto) to lowering the voting age to sixteen - a cynical interpretation of which would see this as a move to bring more valuable young voters into the electoral fray. These voters are also specifically targeted by party leaflets, for instance under the heading 'Let Scotland's Youth Decide! Give Young Scots the Vote!'. The party line is explained in clear terms :

"While 16 and 17 year olds can pay taxes, which are then spent by the Tories, they have no say in how their money is spent. The SNP say that this is wrong - we say give Young Scots the vote. In an independent Scotland that is exactly what an SNP government would do, because we believe that

The SNP's policies can also be said to centre on specifically Scottish issues; their chief tactic is one of setting themselves up as the only defender of true Scottish interests and claiming that under any-one else Scotland will continue to suffer. A good example is the leaflet on water privatisation, which proclaimed :

"Voting Labour, Liberal Democrat or Militant is like handing water privatisation to the Tories on a plate. England's Tory MPs - not our people - are dictating the future of Scotland's water industry. We're not giving Westminster our water. Stop this madness - join the SNP fight to keep Scotland's water public. Independence Works - It's Scotland's Water!"<sup>322</sup>

A similar campaign against VAT on fuel allowed a dual attack focusing on Scotland's energy-rich status and the Conservatives alleged determination to rob Scotland of this advantage, thus:

"The UK is killing Scots. In an energy-rich Scotland, pensioners, young people and the sick will have to pay VAT on domestic fuel. All to make up for Britain's economic collapse - and Tory mistakes...Our country has vast energy resources. An independent Scotland would never support VAT on domestic fuel. Independence works - Britain's finished!"<sup>323</sup>

The SNP then sees itself as the only true defender of Scotland and its interests - the other parties may claim to be so, but they are only paying lip service to the Scottish people, because they are constrained by the logic of Westminster.

What of the wider picture on Scottish identity? The evidence cited in the previous two chapters suggests that amongst the electorate the overwhelming feeling is one of the Scottish identity being at least as important, if not more so than its British counterpart. In the 1992 Scottish Election Survey, there was substantial evidence for this contention as summarised in Table 6.5 overleaf:

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<sup>321</sup> Scottish National Party (1993c) 'Scotland's Youth Say - Onward to Independence!'

<sup>322</sup> Scottish National Party (1993d) 'Water Privatisation leaflet'.

<sup>323</sup> Scottish National Party (1993e) 'VAT on domestic fuel leaflet'.



**Table 6.5**  
**National Identity from Scottish Election Survey**

Identity	Percentage (%)
Scottish not British	19
More Scottish than British	40
Equally Scottish and British	33
More British than Scottish	3
British not Scottish	3
N =	957

Thus 19% of the respondents saw themselves as Scottish not British, 40% chose more Scottish than British and 33% saw themselves as equally Scottish and British. These figures provide a huge contrast with the 3% who saw themselves as more British than Scottish and the same 3% figure who saw themselves as British not Scottish.<sup>324</sup> However the poll evidence of previous chapters showed that one of the SNP's largest problems comes in translating strong Scottish identity into votes for them, a fact confirmed by the 1992 data, for with 59% of the sample seeing themselves as either exclusively Scottish or more Scottish than British, there is an obvious shortfall with only 20% of the sample voting SNP. The party then struggles to fully capitalise on identity because it is so widely held, which helps to explain the shift leftward and greater emphasis on socio-economic issues under Alex Salmond's leadership, as the party explicitly targets the Labour Party.

As for the activists the feelings on identity are, as one would expect emphasised:

"I really don't think that there is a British, the English refer to this whole island as English, make no mistake, wherever they go they say the English government and they have this great big Union Jack which they think is the flag of England and refer to the royalty as the Queen of England, so let them get on with it...I think the central government tends to treat us as regions which I think is wrong."

or more explicitly aimed at the false edifice of Britishness :

"Britishness is founded on the parliament and once the parliament..., once one or two of the nations what is Britain go apart then it no longer exists...the fact that after two hundred years there exists a party in Scotland called the Scottish National Party shows the strain".

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<sup>324</sup> Scottish Election Survey Question 64 - see Footnote 280.

There is then no significant debate on the existence of a Scottish identity, the pertinent questions involve the extent to which the SNP can be said to exploit what is a very contested terrain.

What of the Northern League's use of identity? This area has been a source of considerable comment and criticism of the League, with the accusation that a Northern Italian or Padanian identity has never really existed as a unitary concept; rather it has simply been invented by the League. The pre-*Risorgimento* histories were very much based around the various communes of the North and at the very most around regional entities such as the Venetian Republic or Lombardy. This argument is a strong one and is given weight by the very genesis of the various leagues, which were very region-centric and indeed saw considerable distinction drawn between different locales. Thus when Rocchetta calls the Veneto a 'nation' or when Bossi says "Rome uses our territories as if they were hers, without giving the chance to Lombards to say what they think in their own country."<sup>325</sup>, the clear implication is that the various territories where the different leagues sprung up see themselves as intrinsically distinct from each other, a sentiment captured for instance in the Lombard League poster which simply declared "I am Lombard, I vote Lombard"<sup>326</sup>.

There is indeed much support for this point-of-view in the interviews with different League supporters in the Veneto and Lombardy, where phrases such as the following were used :

"Italy has very little meaning for me, it is a geographical expression, it is made up of many little states with their own peculiarities and their own characteristics...it is obvious in our context after a hundred and thirty years of unity, a unity forced on various states, more or less willing, there is a certain consciousness of independence and the desire to express difference in respect to the others has remained...you cannot cancel out a history of more than a thousand years in the case of the Veneto in just over a hundred

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<sup>325</sup> 'The Devil's Own Kingdom' [*The Guardian*, 12/11/93] Section Two, p.19.

<sup>326</sup> '*Il Calendario*' (1994) op. cit. p.30.

years.”

However this is not the whole story, for it leaves out the more general split in Italy between North and South. This division has never had clear geographical lines, but has been pervasive over many years both before and after unification. Cavour was not particularly interested in having the poor South as part of Piedmont’s enlarged realm. Instead the unity of the peninsula was really delivered by Garibaldi and his Thousand who handed over their Southern conquests to King Victor Emmanuel at Teano. Much of the history of the post-*Risorgimento* state has revolved around unsuccessful attempts to modernise the South which have foundered on the rocks of failed agricultural reform, mafia-influenced clientelism and economic corruption. It was at least partly on the back of the tax drain from North to South that the League was able to expand so rapidly through the 1980s as Chapter Five showed. There is also a concept of a more general Northern-ness, showing Italy like many other nation-states to possess several overlapping levels of identity. This concept was also captured by some of the interviewees, thus :

“I’d like to see a North that is more free in the sense that we don’t always have to ask Rome when we want to do something I’d like to see a federal state where local autonomy is strong...in which the people could decide if they remained federated and so the mayor would have power and wouldn’t have to go to Rome for money”.

The League then has been extremely pragmatic in seizing upon an ill-defined sense of distinctiveness and turning it into a powerful tool of political currency. The concepts of the North, Centre and South have become accepted parts of the Italian political lexicon in a very short period of time.<sup>327</sup> The North has replaced Lombardy, Veneto, Piedmont or Trentino on posters, for instance the same golden egg poster described earlier was reproduced after the Northern League’s creation, with the hen

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<sup>327</sup> The creation of a sense of Northern-ness is well captured by Gallagher thus: “(it was a) multi-regional community sharing the same culture...identifying threats to the cultural authenticity of the north Italian ‘community’ in order to encourage greater solidarity between its different parts was a logical development which bears comparison with the way that fledgling nationalist movements have sought to build a constituency.” T. Gallagher (1992a) op. cit. p.74.

this time representing the North (rather than just Lombardy) and a new slogan saying “Southern hegemony means the power to plunder the North.”<sup>328</sup> The Southern population are characterised as individualistic with no civic sense and a tendency to laziness caused by their ‘*mafiosità*’ - they provide a stark contrast to hard-working, law-abiding Northerners. As regards the criticism of cynical invention, this thesis has argued that all identities are to an extent invented, in Benedict Anderson’s sense of being ‘imagined’. Certainly many Northerners ‘daily plebiscite’ on their ‘imagined community’ does now seem to end at Tuscany, most definitely excluding Rome and its Southern fiefdoms. However as earlier mentioned there are other movements in existence who interpret the Northern identity in different ways, and there is much more debate as to what exactly the ‘North’ comprises in Italy, than there is over Scotland which has a more clearly defined territory and integrated history.

The League then is more pragmatic in its use of identity the SNP but this stems, at least partly, from their respective settings. The Northern League has only limited rivals in identity terms - such as the minuscule *Lega Alpina Lombarda*<sup>329</sup> - whereas all the SNP’s electoral rivals profess Scottishness to some degree. There are similarities, however, in the way that both parties’ self-perceptions portray themselves as the true carriers of the identity grail. This was illustrated in Scotland by the furore which followed the SNP leafleting outside cinemas showing the film

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid. p.58.

<sup>329</sup> This party polled only 0.3% of the national vote taking most of its votes in the Northern Alpine regions of Lombardy. The League faces similar challenges from both the *Lega Autonomia Veneta* and the *Lega per il Piemonte* which poll similarly small amounts of preferences. These organisations continued existence after the set-up of the umbrella Northern League does, however, provide evidence for continued tension about the concept of the North with their common objection to the subsuming of well-defined Lombard, Venetian or Piedmontese interests to a vague notion of Northern-ness. A potentially larger challenge to the League’s dominance came in January 1995 which saw Roberto Maroni breakaway from Bossi and setting-up of rival Federal Northern League which remained prepared to work with the right after Bossi had pulled the plug on Berlusconi’s government. All told the League lost about 20% of their deputies, and the adverse publicity caused by the split between Maroni and Bossi had a clear negative effect on the League’s ratings in early 1995 and may be seen as a prime cause in the shift toward a more secessionist platform.

'Braveheart' which purported to depict the life of 'Scotland's Guardian', William Wallace. The other parties cried foul over the SNP's appropriation of such a major historical figure, but the SNP countered that Wallace had fought for Scottish independence and so they were his only true heirs. The League meanwhile combines its Northern identity with an air of superiority over the other parties both because it holds itself apart from their machinations and also in its assertion that it holds the key to fundamental reform which the others are still searching for. Both of these attitudes can be seen to stem from the way identity is used by the parties.

### **6.8 Ideological Fluidity**

An issue which attracts much attention in analyses of both the Scottish National Party and the Northern League is the extent to which both parties display ideological fluidity. It has been argued that especially in the case of the League it is difficult to situate them at a specific point on the left-right spectrum, and that likewise while the 1990's SNP has self-consciously positioned itself further left in a bid to compete more effectively with the dominant Labour Party in Scotland, not all adherents and voters have been persuaded by this move.<sup>330</sup> This section will investigate the extent to which there is evidence for ideological fluidity in the two parties' policy positions and ask how much of any such fluidity stems from populist flirtation and how much from a genuine heterogeneity in opinion amongst their support.

Section 6.6 has already shown the extent to which the SNP has embraced a burgeoning European Union as a gateway to independence. In this context it is interesting to note the SNP attitude to local government as expounded by their Home

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<sup>330</sup> Whilst 62% of the Scottish Election Survey sample saw the SNP as closer to the Labour Party, 14% thought it lay closer to the Conservative party and the same figure thought it to be equidistant from both - see SES, op. cit., Question 77a.



Affairs spokesperson, Fiona Hyslop, at a Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland seminar on the re-organisation of Scottish local government, thus :

“The SNP argue that we should define ourselves in a European context on international criteria. It is a sad if not predictable indictment that the Conservative Government has consistently refused to sign up to the European Charter of Local Government which recognises the autonomy of local government in source of funding and sphere of power...SNP constitutional policy for an independent parliament would entrench the powers of local government so they cannot be abused by any one particular Government.”<sup>331</sup>

This position begs the question of just what competencies would be left at the traditional nation-state level under an SNP regime and further calls into question any view which would portray that party as pursuing traditional nationalist ends.

From the 1996 viewpoint, several years after the Scottish Constitutional Convention has been operative without the participation of either the SNP or the Scottish Conservatives, the 1987 SNP manifesto makes interesting reading. After the election the manifesto made clear that:

“The SNP will press for the establishment of a Scottish Constitutional Convention within the first six months of a Parliament, and the implementation of the Convention’s recommendations within a reasonable timescale thereafter...In the Scottish Convention, SNP representatives would argue the case for independence as the most appropriate form of government to guarantee the future of Scotland.”<sup>332</sup>

Strong words on the issue of the Convention, but words which were quickly side-stepped when it became clear that the SNP’s independence platform was not shared by the majority of delegates to a supposedly consensual body. The SNP did a quick volte-face and became one of the Convention’s chief critics, though not with the whole-hearted support of some of their activists, for instance:

“..that’s one of the main questions that’s always bothered me actually because when I was in Scotland United I was one of these people vociferously arguing that parties should stick together and I was really angry with members of the SNP who wouldn’t talk to Labour...the Constitutional Convention is a difficult one, I think actually,..yes because publicly it looks very bad and it just looks almost silly and quite childish.”

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<sup>331</sup> F.Hyslop ‘Local Government and a Scottish parliament : An SNP View’ in “From Wheatley to ...What?” [Report on the First Seminar in a Series on the Re-organisation of Scottish Local Government, Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland, 1995] p. 48.

<sup>332</sup> Scottish National Party (1995) op. cit. pp.5-7.

On Europe, the Convention and over the longer term on actual constitutional end, the SNP can be said to have displayed considerable ideological fluidity.

Such inconsistency has been a constant criticism levelled against the Northern League. As already reported above there has been a move through the original separatism of the Venetian League and self-determination of the Lombard League to federalism, confederation with macro-regions, and onward with the launch of the recall parliament at Mantua and the spectre of independence, raised again in 1996 because autonomy has not been delivered. However perhaps the biggest volte-face has been the League's position on immigration and more specifically its use of xenophobic and racist rhetoric. There is no doubt that at its outset, the League adopted a very confrontational attitude on the issue of immigration with posters such as one depicting a feminine figure bearing a sash which identifies her as the central state stirring a cauldron out of which various arms and legs are visible with the legend "Third World immigration : it breaks up society and carries it toward fascism"<sup>333</sup> The League was an outspoken critic of the Martelli laws which they saw as an attempt to introduce more immigration into Italy. Furthermore they also targeted their campaigns against other marginal groups in society, such as the Ligurian League campaign leaflet which declared "League or gypsies! The Ligurian Northern League says no to gypsy camps in cities!"<sup>334</sup> Such stances led the League to be daubed as a far-right movement whose key issue was immigration, and brought simplistic comparisons with the French 'Front National', as discussed earlier in Chapter Four.

However the expansion of their vote in the early 1990s and the attraction of voters from all points on the political spectrum is a clear indication that the League did not

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<sup>333</sup> L. Costantini (1994) op. cit. p.193 Fig. 2.

<sup>334</sup> Il Calendario(1994) op. cit. p.51.

remain as a niche party, with only one narrow concern, in the words of one of the activists interviewed:

“..from the political point of view, we have moved from the image of a racist party, a party of the right, and that’s better for the function we perform...there are many opinions, there is the more liberal opinion, and there is the more left-wing opinion, there are so many opinions, in fact it’s difficult sometimes to bring them all together in a party.”

Bossi is cynical about the initial use of immigration - for him it was simply a tactic to gain coverage. The anti-immigration stance was complemented by accusations of internal racism in the form of anti-Southern sentiment - both for Bossi were shock tactics, deliberately (and successfully) employed to gain the League some publicity in a very hostile press, as he says “We decided to exploit the widespread anti-Southernism in Lombardy, as in other regions of the North, to attract the attention of both the public and the media.”<sup>335</sup>. Against those who accuse him specifically of anti-Southern racism he replies “Whenever I meet idiots who raise the question of Northern hate toward the South, I always tell them : ‘You are talking to somebody who lives with a *terrona*’”<sup>336</sup>. The League attitude to immigration is still one of limiting the numbers allowed in, but the argument is now couched in terms of how investment must be channelled toward the countries of immigrant origin in an attempt to solve the root of the problem, whilst concern is also expressed at the plight of immigrants in Italy, the vast majority of whom are constrained to low-paid work or street-selling (in fact many are known as ‘*Vu compra*’, the Italian for ‘Do you want to buy?’), Bossi again:

“We are tired, just as we were eight centuries ago, of being a land invaded, first by the South, now by the Third World. There are no jobs, and to open the doors wide to immigrants and then to leave them in miserable conditions is a crime. This centralism has provoked more damage than a war.”<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> U. Bossi (1992) “*Vento dal Nord - La mia Vita, La Mia Lega*” p.42.

<sup>336</sup> ‘*The Guardian*’, 12/11/93 op.cit. p.19 ‘*Terrona*’ means ‘a woman of the South’ and refers to Bossi’s marriage to a Sicilian, Manuela Marrone, however this word has derogatory overtones with its derivation from ‘*terra*’ meaning ‘earth’ and is better translated as ‘Southern peasant’.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

Like the SNP, the League can be said to have been ideologically promiscuous in a way that traditional nationalist parties simply were not, tied as they were to their pursuit of the nation-state. These contemporary parties can thus again be seen to differ from their historical predecessors in terms of their fluidity of ideology and this thesis would argue that such fluidity stems from the move away from the idea of seeking all the traditional levers of power associated with the nation-state.

### **6.9 Rhetoric and Nature of Campaigning**

An important part of both parties' projections is their claim to be somehow different to the political parties who are their competitors, not only in their constitutional intent but also in the presentation of their message. The League especially have stressed their absolute difference from '*i partiti tradizionali*' - the traditional parties - with their associated connotation of clientelism, centralisation and, most damagingly, corruption. The SNP have also played on their position outside the governing clique and talk in a similar vein to the League of breaking the existing political mould. This section will assess to what extent the nature and rhetoric of the parties is similar in its approach to their political rivals and the propagation of their own policies.

One common theme for the SNP through the years has been the persistent betrayal of the Scottish people by the unionist parties - Conservatives, Labour and Liberal alike. This was highlighted in a party publication to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the party in 1994, entitled 'Our Changing Scotland'. In this document the history of Scottish Home Rule is traced from the nineteenth century onwards, thus :

“There had been calls for a National Party in the 1890s and again in 1923/24, but most potential members expected that first Liberalism and then Labourism would deliver Home rule. By the late 1920s, it was obvious that

neither would.”<sup>338</sup>

This theme of betrayal is one which has been returned to throughout the SNP's history - the idea being that the Scottish people will only get real change if they vote SNP - other parties may promise varying degrees of Home Rule, but they have yet to deliver and the commitment of an incoming Labour government under Tony Blair to devolution is constantly questioned.

An interesting development in the last fifteen years has been the manner in which the Labour Party has been attacked for failing to stand up to the Conservative governments in power in 1979, as with a leaflet on the Strathclyde water referendum when 97% voted against proposed government reforms, inspiring the question “Why have 5 English Tory MPs changed Scotland and 49 Labour MPs haven't? Because Labour MPs never change anything!”<sup>339</sup> This approach explicitly acknowledges Labour's dominance in Scotland and targets them as the chief SNP rival - a tactic which as has been discussed has caused the SNP to move its own politics leftward in direct confrontation. A leaflet from the 1994 European election is typical, under the header ‘1979-1994. Fifteen Years of Labour Failure’, it declares :

“People in Scotland are full of trust. Every time Scots vote Labour they vote on trust. But Labour betray that trust every time. In Westminster Labour wants a quiet life and do back stage deals to let the Tories win. Labour even lets Tory MPs from England take the democracy out of Scottish Local Government. Labour Councils in Scotland are slashing public services - directed by Tory ministers in London. Fifteen years of Tory government has meant unemployment, factory closures, benefit cuts, homelessness, an appalling health service. And fifteen years of Labour control in Scotland has meant nothing. It has to be different. A strong SNP vote means Westminster takes proper notice of Scotland.”<sup>340</sup>

Thus both the Scottish Labour Party and English Conservatives are portrayed as partners in the Westminster crimes committed toward the Scottish body politic over the last decade and a half.

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<sup>338</sup> Scottish National Party (1994b) ‘Our Changing Scotland - The Scottish National Party 1934 - 1994’ p.2.

<sup>339</sup> Scottish National Party (1993f) ‘97% No leaflet’.

<sup>340</sup> Scottish National Party (1994c) ‘European Election leaflet’.



To show how far the SNP leadership sees itself as a party of the left, it has started to accuse the two major parties of being difficult to distinguish from one another. In an attempt to turn around the ‘Tartan Tory’ epithet often levelled against the SNP in the past by the Labour Party, Alex Salmond declares in his preface to the 1992 election manifesto :

“At this General Election we are faced with our most important choice for many generations : a choice to go forward into the mainstream of Europe, or to be stuck in a backwater of Britain...Alone amongst the political parties in Scotland, the Scottish National Party is offering a way forward which will produce social justice, social concern and economic progress. ..The policies of the Tartan Tories, whether led by Ian Laing (sic) or Donald Dewar, are the policies of Scotland’s past. Kinnock and Major are equally irrelevant to Scotland’s needs. Only the Scottish National Party has a vision of what must happen in Scotland.” <sup>341</sup>

The SNP then clearly targets the Labour Party in assigning the blame for the failure to bring constitutional change (albeit devolution) to Scotland, however in so doing it is hardly differentiating itself from the other political parties, rather it is participating in the same sort of electoral politics as its rivals. Indeed a leaflet issued at the time of the Maastricht ratification process was headlined ‘Labour and the Tories - One Big Party Together’. However the SNP does strive to differentiate its message from that of other parties. The quotes given above are peppered with references to the control which London has and which the SNP is seeking to relinquish. To this end its 1983 Manifesto’s conclusion drew a comparison with the American Declaration of Independence, quoting the following passage:

“When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the Earth the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.” <sup>342</sup>

Grand words which attempt to position the SNP’s goal alongside some of the great struggles of human history (in contrast to the other Scottish parties). In a different vein their 1992 manifesto included a very populist message from that most famous of

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<sup>341</sup> Scottish National Party (1992a) op. cit. p.1.

<sup>342</sup> Scottish National Party (1983) op. cit. p.24.

Scots, Sean Connery (he also did the voice over on one of their campaign broadcasts). In a message entitled 'Go For It....!', he said:

"Everyone can see that nothing will ever change if we don't break with the old, outdated Union. I can't imagine that anybody who lives in Scotland can really want not to be independent; can want to turn their back on their own identity and their own nation. Being a Scot is the most natural thing in the world to me. But you can't get independence without voting for the SNP. That's why I joined. The other parties will talk for ever but devolution is just a mishmash that can only lead to trouble...I have only one message for my fellow Scots : this is your chance - go for it!" <sup>343</sup>

The SNP then tries to differentiate itself from the other parties in the Scottish political system but often fails to do so and is tarred with same political brush as other parties, becoming embroiled in bitter constituency battles, for instance with Labour in Monklands in 1994 or the Conservatives in Perth & Kinross in 1995<sup>344</sup>. As a consequence the SNP often fails to bring its bigger constitutional blueprint properly to the fore of its campaigning.

The Northern League has certainly developed a distinctive style of campaigning which is built on differences both in venue and language. They have carried on the long Italian tradition of '*piazza*' politics, with Bossi indefatigable in his will to go out on the streets, as with his summer 1995 tour around Northern cities to talk directly to the people about the Mantua parliament. The League has extended this principle of taking the message to the people, thereby cutting the perceived hostile press out of the equation, by leafleting in bars and setting up information stalls at large football matches (the Milan derby between *Internazionale* and *AC Milan* is attended by almost 100,000 Northerners). Moreover the League tries to differentiate its own message from that of other parties by using dialect words, such as *Lumbard*, instead of the conventional Italian *Lombardo*, or by making crude puns and using slang expressions in its posters and documents.

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<sup>343</sup> Scottish National Party (1992a) op. cit. p.17.

<sup>344</sup> In the Monklands by-election there were widespread accusations of religious bigotry between the SNP and the Labour Party, whilst Perth & Kinross saw mud-slinging between the Conservatives and the SNP on the issue of Roseanna Cunningham's attitude to the monarchy.

As for the rhetoric of the League, they unashamedly declare they are working for the popular will, with one of their posters and documents containing the play on the legal term '*Nel Nome Del Popolo Italiano*' ('In the Name of the Italian Populace') that the League is working '*Nel Nome Della Gente*' ('In the name of the People')<sup>345</sup>, showing clear contempt for the notion of an 'Italian people'. They see themselves in absolute opposition to all the traditional parties which have shared complicitly in the corruption which has mired the First Republic, summed up in another poster "Freedom for institutions and for the economy. No to the statism of the Christian Democrats, the Communists and the Fascists".<sup>346</sup> Elsewhere these parties are accused of being "friends of Craxi's and Andreotti's", whilst the League holds itself well above the various kickback scandals which have erupted since 1993.

As for the presentation of the League's dominant policy end, namely the wholesale reform of the Italian state, it is a task which they see in quasi-revolutionary terms, for instance their 1994 election posters included such phrases as "It's a revolution which must be concluded" and "1994 - The dictatorship falls"<sup>347</sup> The current state then has unquestionably failed and the most obvious symptom of this is the inequity of current taxation, the reform of which is one of the League's key planks. They tried to organise a non-payment campaign of the extraordinary tax imposed on property in 1992/3 but quickly concluded that the Northerners' ethos could not stomach non-payment with its Southern connotations.<sup>348</sup> Thus the emphasis was changed to complete reform of the tax system, with the following types of questions and demands:

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<sup>345</sup> Il Calendario (1994) op. cit. p.19.

<sup>346</sup> See Lega Nord '*Lega Nord*' the Official Newspaper of the Northern League [Year XII, No. 6, 28th February 1994] p. 10.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> For an account of this '*imposta straordinaria sugli immobili*' - see Miglio (1994) op. cit. pp.33-36.

“Where does our money finish up? We ask for respect for those who work honestly. Enough of the great fiscal robbery! We want autonomy like the Valle d’Aosta or the Trentine South Tirol so that ninety per cent of our taxes stay in our region.”<sup>349</sup>

This tax issue has been woven together with the centralism of Rome and the corruption of the traditional parties to create a clarion call for the League thus, as Bossi says:

“Lombardy is not the fool that pays other people’s debts. Lombardy does not want to follow Rome passively into bankruptcy because it does not care to sacrifice at Rome’s altar of misgovernment the rights of its citizens, the sweat of its children, the labour and the character of its people.”<sup>350</sup>

A key word for the League is then liberty - they want tax freedom, institutional freedom, and regional freedom to control education, health, pensions, the legal system and immigration.

Another strand of the League’s rhetoric is the attempt to create a quasi-subcultural belonging in the first instance to the specific locale, but also more generally to the concept of the North. In this context the use of symbols such as the League’s flag with the ancient Lombard warrior emblazoned across it have always been recognised as important, for instance in the first programme of the Lombard League in 1983, Article 2 says:

“(The League is) for the reaffirmation of our culture, history, the Lombard language, our social values and morals. Against each of these an outrage has been committed toward Lombard national identity. Therefore instead of the tricolour, the historic flag of the Lombard Nation (a red cross on a white background) should always be displayed.”<sup>351</sup>

This tack has been taken further by the marketing of many objects and gadgets which were specifically regional, from pens and car stickers, to more unusual objects such as a Lombard watch, which tells the ‘*Ura Lumbarda*’ <sup>352</sup> and all of which have proved very popular with League supporters.

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<sup>349</sup> L. Costantini (1994) op. cit. p. 195 Fig.10.

<sup>350</sup> ‘*The Guardian*’ 12/11/93 op.cit. p.19.

<sup>351</sup> Lega Nord (1993) op. cit. p. 24.

<sup>352</sup> See the advert for watches cited in ‘*Il Calendario*’ (1994) op. cit. p. 25. The advert is written in the Lombard dialect and is scarcely intelligible to a speaker of Italian, such are the

Like the SNP, the League also uses the broader international context to lend weight to its own domestic argument for autonomy. For instance in a 1989 European election leaflet the Venetian League has a long list of territories and the populations who have the right to them such as “Wales to the Welsh, Quebec to the Quebecois and Lombardy to the Lombards” (though no mention of the Scots), before concluding that “the Veneto should belong to the Venetians” and then quoting as follows from the 1975 Helsinki Declaration of Human Rights:

“All peoples (and therefore even the Venetian people) always have the right to determine with complete freedom, when and as they wish, their internal and external status...and their right to self-determination and their own government.”<sup>353</sup>

The final issue which needs to be discussed is the situation of the League on the left-right spectrum. As earlier discussed, the League was initially pigeon-holed as a movement of the far right due to its alleged racism, but the electoral evidence of Chapters Four and Five points to a conception of the league as outwith the right-left continuum. The League itself has made this position more its own policy, claiming that its entry into government with the right-wing parties of Berlusconi and Fini was necessary to control these recycled agents of the old regime, since for Bossi by the second half of 1993, “there had already started a sophisticated and transformist operation to save the centralist system substituting the faces and the names of the front-line.”<sup>354</sup>

After the League’s withdrawal from the government in December 1994 there was a tentative opening to the left with a handful of local alliances in mayoral and city elections, but by the regional elections of April 1995, the League had decided very

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differences, not only in spellings but also in actual vocabulary, for instance ‘ureloc’ not ‘orologio’ for time-piece.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid. p.27.

<sup>354</sup> U. Bossi (1995) op. cit. p.3.



much to go it alone, shunning alliance and holding up its autonomy message as very different, as the Venetian League programme showed:

“Northern League/Venetian League. Neither with the right, nor with the left, but for the Veneto. A Venetian government for those who live and work in the Veneto.”<sup>355</sup>

This idea of being above ideological divisions and perhaps creating a new, territorial cleavage is again highlighted in a very instructive paragraph which comes from the League’s world-wide web site under an entry on future prospects:

“The Northern League must stay outside and above the left-right scheme, fighting for its well-defined goal, against all the other parties if necessary, but at the same time trying to catalyse transversal support among them...The dreams of a revolution leading to the ultimate goal for many of us - full independence of the North - must not be confused with reality. Yet these dreams must survive : they may be eventually realised in a European Union based on a federation of regions, after the dissolution of the nation-states; after all, the structure of the nation-state is a historical artefact functional to a given social and economic situation which will soon become obsolete. Building the future federation, as well as rewriting the Italian Constitution, will be the future goals of the Northern League and of other federalistic movements in the Continent.”<sup>356</sup>

Thus the direction in which the League wants to head and the position in which it sees itself in Italy are manifest. The initial manoeuvres of the 1996 election campaign saw suggestion of an alliance with the centre-left, PDS, on the proviso that the League made no explicit reference to secession, but this overture was rejected as another example of the establishment again trying to control the League, albeit the leftist establishment rather than its rightist cousin in 1994. Such a flirtation with the centre-left, having two years ago been part of the Pole of Liberty amply illustrates the League’s ideological fluidity.

Both parties like to see themselves as somehow above the political fray, believing that their goal represents a finer vision of society which contrasts with the short-termism and self-interested predilections of the centralist political parties. However,

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<sup>355</sup> Lega Nord (1995b) Venetian League ‘Programma per le elezioni regionali’.

<sup>356</sup> Lega Nord (1996) ‘Prospects for the Future - The European Union of Regions’ [Lega Nord, World -Wide Web Site, <http://www.agora.stm.it/politic/z.nord.htm>, accessed 2/2/96].

the reality for both is quite different - they have to compete for votes within the existing system and often resort to intra-partisan attacks. Both, moreover, participate in the central legislatures and aim to broker reform from the centre, a tactic which is in stark contrast to that adopted, for instance, by Sinn Fein in the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising, when they set up the Dail (Irish parliament). To an extent then both the SNP and the League can be seen to be acting like traditional parties, albeit whose agenda has one over-riding reform within it. They cannot escape this condition and it dictates some of the nature of their aggressive campaigning which is used against them by their opponents to claim politics as usual, where the parties say they are different. To the extent that they do behave like such traditional parties the argument that the League and the SNP can be seen as new paradigms of autonomist parties is diminished, although some of their behaviour is determined by the electoral systems in which both are situated. Their playing of the political game in electoral terms does not diminish the differences from traditional parties in other areas which the other sections of this chapter have described.

### **6.10 Summary**

This chapter has used three different data sources in an attempt to put flesh on the contention that the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League have several similarities which can be usefully compared. These are internal party areas, such as the tensions over constitutional means and ends, the tendency to use anti-centralism versus London and Rome, a pro-European attitude which creates considerable questions over the degree of autonomy to be obtained and also more systemic considerations, such as the manner in which identity is used, the accusation of ideological fluidity with its connotation of shallow populism and the nature of the party's campaigns and attacks on opponents which can mean the parties ending up looking like these opponents. It is hoped that through the triangulation of party

literature, activist interviews and secondary data that the claim of comparison of what can initially be seen as very diverse movements has been substantiated. The task for the next chapter is one of marrying the theories and the practice in that it will seek to answer to the extent to which the two parties can be said to be different versions of a single phenomenon, having been shown to be different from traditional nationalist movements.

This chapter would contend that the two parties are united in the belief that government in general needs to be accountable to people within specific geographic localities and to this end, both seek greater autonomy for their defined spheres. Chapters Three, Four and Five showed similarities in context, genesis and voter appeal whilst this current chapter has added similarities in many veins of policy and rhetoric. Having established the basis for comparison, this thesis will now examine the extent to which either or both of the parties under consideration can be said to represent the theories outlined in Chapter Two.

**CHAPTER SEVEN -**  
**AUTONOMOUS EUNUCHS?**  
**THE PARADOX OF THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY AND THE**  
**NORTHERN LEAGUE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**7.1 Questions to be Answered**

This penultimate chapter seeks to draw together the various strands of argument and evidence which have been discussed up to this point. It will start to draw conclusions about the Scottish National Party and the Northern League which will be made explicit in the final chapter. As the title suggests the dominant theme of this closing analysis is the European Union and the extent to which autonomists within this organisation face different parameters - not just from similar movements outwith the Union's auspices - but also from predecessors in their own locales. The European Union, notwithstanding its development in fits and spurts at the behest of nation-states, is an organisation unprecedented in political history in terms of the explicit sharing of sovereignty which its members agree to when they sign their treaties of accession.<sup>357</sup> It is the argument of this thesis that it has not so much changed the goalposts of autonomism, as created a wholly new ballgame, with new rules and referees.

This chapter will attempt to assess any decline in the powers and abilities of nation-states within the European Union. It does not argue that the nation-state has died, nor that state-nationalism can no longer be found in the EU, with the 1996 beef crisis serving up powerful evidence that certainly British nationalism is alive and well. The arguments of those such as Alan Milward who maintain that Europe's pooling of

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<sup>357</sup> Although the five members of the Andean Pact - Peru, Bolivia, Columbia, Venezuela and Ecuador - announced in March 1996 the changing of their 27-year-old customs union into an 'Andean Community' modelled on European integration which the Bolivian President said had a 'desire for genuine integration' [Financial Times, 12/3/96].p.3.

sovereignty has helped its nation-states survive will be discussed and debated, however the potential historical import of the changes which are being wrought by the EU will not be shirked or toned down simply because they are contemporary. One of the paradoxes of continuing integration is the polarisation of debate between those who want the nation-state to reassert itself and those who see continued integration into monetary and security spheres as the beginning of the Inter-Governmental Conference in Turin in March 1996 has brought into sharp focus. What can be said though is that never since the concept of nationalism was first coined in the aftermath of the French Revolution has it faced such a substantive challenge from a non-state organisation. In the globalised, integrated, modern context the nation-state has to fight with other levels of institutions, it no longer has automatic primacy, as Keating and Jones make clear in the preface to their book looking at regions in the EU:

“The nation-state, while it showed no sign of fading away in favour of a Europe of the Regions, was increasingly penetrated by supranational influences...there is a common dynamic towards increasing regional assertion and a challenging of the decisional monopoly of the nation-state.”  
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It is this contested decisional scenario which provides the contemporary context for the Scottish National Party and the Northern League.

The previous chapters have made clear that grounds for comparison do exist, in terms of history, voters, party make-up and policies. The questions which this chapter will seek to answer concern the ramifications of the European Union on the content of the parties' demands and the ways to a theoretical understanding of the League and the SNP. In general terms the specific strictures imposed by membership of the European Union, either as an independent member-state or as a strong, autonomous region will be examined whilst looking at the blurring of boundaries between the terms 'nation' and 'region'. The parties will then be placed within the

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<sup>358</sup> B. Jones & M. Keating (1995) *"The European Union and the Regions"* Preface pp.v-vi.



general theories of political parties and social movements and the question will be posed of where best in the literature they can be situated, whether they are clearly parties or movements, or whether both facets need to be combined to understand them properly. The similarity or difference of the parties' goals will then be assessed within the wider question of how much the experience of these parties can be generalised. In what ways the two parties under consideration are different from the past, why they have emerged in the late twentieth century in particular and whether there is a need for a different terminology to properly capture the content of these movements will be analysed and assessed.

This chapter then hopes to clarify the extent to which the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League can be seen as different variants of a single phenomenon and pose questions concerning the limited degree of understanding which can be reached if the traditional definitions of nationalism and regionalism are not altered to take account of the European Union's impact.

## **7.2 The Impact of European Union**

Much has already be said about the impact of the European Union upon the member-states which are signatories to its various treaties. In section 6.6 of the last chapter the attitudes of the parties toward Europe was shown to be very favourable, and moreover this was found to be in marked contrast to negative attitudes in the near past for the SNP (which can still be found amongst some of the activists as Chapter Six showed and was recognised to an extent by the commitment to a referendum on monetary union at a special party conference in Dundee at the end of April, although the party leadership remained very much committed to the idea). In this change of attitude the SNP has not been alone, as Keating captures:

“Autonomist and separatist movements, which in the past often saw the Community as one step more remote, and therefore more objectionable,

than national governments, have increasingly come to frame their demands in European terms. Free trade potentially lowers the economic costs of separation considerably, a factor which, in Catalonia, as in Quebec and Scotland, has led nationalist movements to abandon protectionism in favour of autonomy within the free-trade regime. In some cases, this takes the form of a policy of independence in Europe, the Community providing an external support system for a move which otherwise appears fraught with danger uncertainty and cost. Elsewhere, Europe is evoked more vaguely, as providing an arena in which the regional personality can be projected as an alternative frame of reference to the State.”<sup>359</sup>

Europe then is used as a stick with which to beat entrenched ‘nation-state’ governments and is increasingly being portrayed as a means by which smaller geographical units can wage power at an international level - as can be clearly seen by the SNP’s persistent use of the concept of the ‘seat at the table’, as the means by which the Scotland could regain its European and world voice.

However several questions remain, such as what the differences are for a nation or region within an integrating Europe in terms of control over their own destiny; whether the European Union can ever replace nations in terms of meeting identity needs and the extent to which the EU will further pool sovereignty in the future.

In any discussion of nations and regions it is important to bear in mind that ‘nation-states’ and nationalism are relatively new concepts in the whole span of human history. They have been used only for two centuries and prior to decolonisation after the Second World War (when the number of internationally-recognised states grew more than threefold in twenty or so years, from around fifty to over one hundred and fifty<sup>360</sup>), most of the peoples of the world had experienced only feudalism or colonialism. Western Europe is the historical exception rather than the rule and is seen, along with its American offshoot, as the home of the nation-state. However Michael Mann wisely cautions “..lest we get too obsessed with picking winning and losing nations...the nation itself is not natural, but a particular and developing

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid. Keating chapter on ‘Europeanism & Regionalism’ pp.7-8.

<sup>360</sup> See E. Hobsbawm (1995) op. cit. pp.344-345.

historical construct.”<sup>361</sup> This is an important rider in any discussion of sub and supra national challenges to the nation-state. Whilst it has been the dominant unit of politics, nowhere is it set in stone that it must always remain so, the conditions of the late twentieth century may demand different territorial units of organisation. As for the difference between nations and regions, often played on, by those critical of any diminishing of the powers of the nation-states, David Marquand sees both as having similar historic roots, re-affirming that there is no necessity in the nation and state coinciding, rather:

“Nations are regions which made it, which succeeded in establishing a claim to nationhood, sometimes conquering other regions in the process. National cultures are regional cultures which were successfully imposed on other regional cultures...When territorial aspirations are described as ‘regional’, particularly when they are then contrasted with other aspirations described as ‘national’, it is usually with bad faith, the intention being to suggest that the first set of aspirations are somehow less serious and therefore deserve less consideration, than the second.”<sup>362</sup>

Both Britain and Italy could certainly be seen in this light with Piedmont and England being the regions which ‘made it’ and then sought to impose dominant political systems and cultures on other contiguous regions which became part of a greater ‘nation’ (although the dominant culture in Italy was Tuscan rather than the Francophone Piedmontese culture).

The point then is that the concept of the European Union and the regions within it are best approached with an open mind, in that they may be a precursor to future forms of organisation. What can be said unequivocally is that no European nation-state has absolute independence of action in the late twentieth century, for as Chapter Two showed economic and political globalisation has meant that sovereignty is very much negotiated depending on the sphere of government. Future debate on European integration will focus on the extent to which the process of joint decision-making will be extended onward from the current competences of the ‘*acquis communautaire*’.

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<sup>361</sup> M. Mann (ed.) (1990) “*The Rise & Decline of the Nation-State*” p.9.

<sup>362</sup> D. Marquand (1991) ‘Nations, Regions and Europe’ in B. Crick (ed.) “*National Identities*” p. 33.

The contemporary debates in European politics centre on the attitudes to deeper integration through monetary union and security integration, along with integrated home affairs and justice policies. No matter the outcome of current debates, there is a definite trend which may be observed in the post-war period, captured thus by Barry Jones:

“..the European nation-state is not what it used to be...the Welfare State associated with post-war social democracy and based on ‘national’ norms is being replaced by the Competition State which has to operate within an ever more interdependent world. This trend is particularly apparent within the member-states of the EC. The continuing integrative process and the increasingly qualified concept of national sovereignty poses profound questions for national political institutions.”<sup>363</sup>

Whilst issue could be taken with the idea that only recently have states become competitors with reference to the intense military and colonial competition of the Great Power era, it is the trend which is highlighted by Jones which is more significant than his terminology used in describing international players. The key reference here is to the concept of qualified majority voting (QMV) institutionalised within the Maastricht Treaty on European Union and now the centre of debate about the Union’s future. The more spheres of policy that QMV is extended into, the more the traditional policy sovereignty of the nation-state will be reduced.

What then are the actual constraints imposed by membership of the European Union? For a member-state, signature of the different treaties which form the legal basis of the Union marks out a very different type of international organisation from the others which have grown rapidly in the post-war era. Beyond simple co-operation, the legal basis of the Community from the 1957 Treaty of Rome to the February 1992 signature of the Treaty on European Union, pledges the members to common laws on a variety of areas and commits them to seek uniformity and harmonisation in a single, rather than just a common market. Moreover European law is unprecedented in the supremacy which it enjoys over nation-state law within

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<sup>363</sup> B. Jones & M. Keating (1995) op. cit. - Jones ‘Conclusion’ pp.289-290.

the treaty-agreed auspices and in the provision of legal institutions capable of reviewing national enforcement records and penalising defaulting states, as Neill Nugent sums up :

“The claim to legal supremacy in the interpretation, application and adjudication of these laws constitutes a central element of the supranational character of the EU. This has necessarily involved the members states in surrendering some of their sovereignty since they are obliged to submit to a legal system over which they have only partial control and, as a corollary, their governments are sometimes prevented from introducing national laws they themselves desire.”<sup>364</sup>

However, after the Luxembourg Compromise of 1966, national governments took comfort in the power of the national veto to block extensions of community law and hence obligations into areas in which they didn't wish extension to occur. This followed General De Gaulle's opposition to the phasing-in of majority voting, with the key phrase from the 1966 *Accords de Luxembourg*, coming in Point II of the communiqué which read: “..the French delegation considers that where important interests are at stake the discussion must be continued until unanimous agreement is reached.”<sup>365</sup> Against this backdrop we can understand why the 1986 Single European Act and the 1992 Treaty on European Union are so anathemic to the proponents of a Gaullist Europe of the nation-states, for after twenty years of ‘Euro-sclerosis’ these two moves re-invoked the principle of majority voting (unanimity having never been legally established) and crucially extended the number of policy areas in which majority voting was constitutionally permissible, which has been illustrated by the limited remit which the UK has in opposing the workings of the EU over the ban on British beef, as Nugent makes clear:

“The Single European Act (SEA) and the Treaty on European Union (TEU) have greatly reduced the circumstances in which the unanimity principle

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<sup>364</sup> N. Nugent (1994) “The Government and Politics of the European Union” p.234.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid. quoted on p.144 - Nugent goes on to say that “Although it had no constitutional status, the Luxembourg compromise came to profoundly affect decision-making in the Council at all levels. It did so because point II of the communiqué came to be interpreted as meaning that any state had the right to exercise a veto on questions which affected its vital national interests - and the states themselves determined when such interests were at stake.”.



applies and it is now largely confined to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) of the TEU (though even here some implementing decisions may be taken by qualified majority vote)...Qualified majority voting now applies to most types of decisions in most policy areas.”<sup>366</sup>

The pillar structure formalised by the Maastricht Treaty is now the focus of the key debates on the Union’s future - if Qualified Majority Voting is extended across all three pillars (ie. into the CFSP and JHA pillars) then almost all aspects of the traditional nation-state’s basket of powers will be subject to some degree of pooling of sovereignty.

This context of the European Union has profound implications for the policies of both the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League, both of which Chapter Six showed to be keen Europhiles, in their attempts to break the vice-like grip of their centralised states. The SNP is aiming for full-scale independence in the EU whilst the League did envisage a substantially increased role for strong regions, building on the creation of the consultative Committee of the Regions by the TEU and if anything in 1996 has moved much closer to the SNP position. However, neither aspiration can be said to be for full autonomy in the sense that many power competences would be controlled at the macro, European level. Membership of the EU, either as a region or a nation entails immediate surrender of powers which were until not long ago, integral to the design of all European nationalists and regionalists alike, such as legal, fiscal, and security competences. The degree to which the European Union is unique in this context is well captured by Nugent:

“The three aspects of EU uniqueness - the complex institutional structure, the range of policy responsibilities, and the combination of intergovernmental and supranational characteristics - have combined, and are combining, to produce a system which is quite unique in the extent to which it involves states engaging in *joint action* to formulate *common* policies and to make *binding* decisions. As the words ‘joint’, ‘common’, and ‘binding’ imply, the process of working together is resulting in the EU becoming ever more intermeshed and interdependent. This is no more clearly seen than in the ratchet-like effect of many aspects of their relationships and their shared

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<sup>366</sup> Ibid. p.143.

activities : ratchet-like in the sense that it will not be possible for them to be reversed without creating major constitutional, legal, political and economic difficulties at both EU and national levels.”<sup>367</sup>

This view certainly attracts dissent, for instance in Alan Milward’s collection of essays where any moves toward the surrender of sovereignty are portrayed as understandable only in terms of nation-states advancing their own selfish interests. It is argued that they recognise that these interests can best be realised by collective action and so are content to pool a limited amount of sovereignty to maximise their overall power and influence. Thus Milward memorably describes the moves toward European integration as “part of that post-war rescue of the European nation-state”<sup>368</sup>. For instance Milward asserts that the SEA and the TEU simply recognise new national priorities and even includes EMU within this line of analysis, claiming that:

“The reality was that not only did virtually all power remain with the nation-state and its bureaucracy, with only limited surrenders of national sovereignty being made to integrationist institutions and only for narrowly defined purposes, but that states were also able to assert the priority of a national interest within the integrationist framework.”<sup>369</sup>

However it is interesting that Milward’s discussion of ‘the frontier of national sovereignty’ encompasses 1945 until 1992 - the very year in which Maastricht was signed. Nugent and Milward both recognise the same phenomenon and simply interpret them from different angles - the former seeing a pooling of sovereignty to maximise the utility of all, the latter placing it much more in the prism of existing national interests which in the global age demand inter-state co-operation. The fact remains that there is no substantive dispute as to the process of integration, rather it revolves around the motives for co-operation and pooling of sovereignty. However, the more that Europe integrates and such symbolic powers as monetary and exchange-rate policy pass to the European level, the more difficult it will become to

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid. pp.433-434.

<sup>368</sup> A. Milward (1994) *“The European Rescue of the Nation-State”* p.4.

<sup>369</sup> A. Milward (1993) *op. cit.* p.4.

sustain Milward's argument without reducing it to the absurd level of the nation-state having to give away all its powers to survive.

A more substantial criticism of the EU can be found in the analysis conducted by Ernst Haas into the potential for a European identity which he explores by looking at the Eurobarometer surveys over time. His research clearly identifies a decline in affinities for nation-states but as to its successor, there is no clear picture, thus:

"None of the data at our disposal can clearly tell us whether a European identity is replacing the nation-state as the focus of individual loyalty...there seems to be a weakened sense of nationhood, but it has not been translated into a strengthened sense of Europeaness."<sup>370</sup>

Haas identifies four options for the future - the status quo of liberal nationalism with inherent contradictions, a federal European state, a decentralisation of government within existing national units or a return to inter-war national closure in which interdependent ties are cut and protectionism returns. He argues that the chosen route will depend upon the manner in which the Dahrendorf problem is resolved, a dilemma which he defines thus:

"Life chances consist of options and bonds. Modern Europeans want options - for personal growth, for improvement of their status and income - but they also want to preserve communal bonds with their fellows, with a historical tradition, with an accepted moral code. Options without such bonds lead to anomie; bonds without options imply tyranny."<sup>371</sup>

In this Haas provides the potential to reconcile the sub-national and supra-national challenges identified in contemporary European states. The evidence gathered here suggests that whilst many contemporary 'options' are bound up in the European Union, 'bonds' are being rediscovered and reinvoked in sub-national units. As such the conversion of autonomist movements to support of an integrated Europe outlined earlier becomes much more comprehensible. Not only does the EU provide an arena for attack on nation-states, it allows the potential existence of much smaller units of

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<sup>370</sup> E.B. Haas (1990) *op. cit.* p.343.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.* p. 313.

governance without an actual or perceived decrease in the ‘options’ available and so helps to foster the identities exploited by the SNP and the League.

The European Union then is the key factor in the environment facing these two parties, both in explaining the partial breakdown of the nation-states within which they operate and also helping to legitimise their claims to political and economic viability, notwithstanding the large schism between their proposals and those which traditional nationalists would advance. It seems that the concurrent trends to sub- and supra-national pressure on traditional states need not be portrayed as contradictory, but rather can be seen as linked to each other as new territorial units become viable arenas of government in the globalised age. The next section will seek to clarify how such territoriality has been politicised in the Scottish and Northern Italian contexts and highlight the degree of continuity or change from previous forms of politicisation.

### **7.3 Parties or Movements?**

One of the questions which this thesis has sought to resolve is the extent to which the two parties under consideration resemble traditional political parties or are better understood as wider movements which have assumed a political form. This section will seek to draw together the strings of this discussion and reach a conclusion after summing up what is understood by the concepts ‘political party’ and ‘social movement’.

Alan Ware identifies the blurred boundary between different types of political organisations in his book ‘Political Parties and Party Systems’, thus:

“..attempting a ‘definition’ of a party is rather like attempting to define an elephant - anyone who has seen one knows what it looks like, but providing a definition for a person who happens never to have come across one is rather difficult. The problem is that of identifying precisely the boundaries

between parties and other kinds of social and political institutions.”<sup>372</sup>

Ware then attempts to provide clarity by identifying five key features of political parties. These are :

- i) the bringing together of people with the aim of exercising power in a given state;
- ii) the use of legitimate means in pursuing their ends (in contrast to terrorist means);
- iii) the contesting of elections in the state, where and when they are held;
- iv) the representation of more than a single, narrow interest within the society;
- v) the grouping of people with similar beliefs, attitudes and values.

He recognises that these criteria can be disputed but synthesises them into the following definition:

“A political party is an institution that (a) seeks influence in a state, often by attempting to occupy positions in government, and (b) usually consists of more than a single interest in the society and so to some degree attempts to ‘aggregate interests’.” <sup>373</sup>

The insertion of the qualifying ‘to some degree’ in this definition is Ware’s acknowledgement of the partial breakdown of his fourth condition listed above, for over the last two decades Western Europe has witnessed the emergence of several types of political party which have one core issue as their *raison d’etre*. This stands in stark contrast to the idea most associated with post-war West European party systems of the ‘catch-all party’ which was defined by Otto Kirchheimer as :

“Abandoning attempts at the intellectual or moral *encadrement* of the masses, it is turning more fully to the electoral scene, trying to exchange effectiveness in depth for a wider audience and more immediate electoral success. The narrower political task and the immediate electoral goal differ sharply from the former all-embracing concerns; today the latter are seen as counter-productive since they deter segments of a potential nation-wide clientele.”<sup>374</sup>

This concept from 1966 can be seen as very much a part of uncontested nation-states, with the ‘catch-all’ party striving for a ‘nation-wide’ vote. Of course very few parties managed to achieve anything even approaching half of the electorate’s votes in West

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<sup>372</sup> A. Ware (1996) “Political Parties and Party Systems” p.2.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid. p.5.

<sup>374</sup> O. Kirchheimer ‘The Catch-All Party’ in P. Mair (ed.) (1990) “The West European Party System” p.52.



European democracies and at best one could normally only talk in terms of ‘catch-quite-a-lot’ parties. However the demise of such parties with the unfreezing of Lipset & Rokkan’s observed stability<sup>375</sup> is significant, especially when one considers the type of parties to which the previously ‘caught’ voters have migrated to and the degree to which new cleavages seem to have opened up. Thus had Lipset & Rokkan waited two decades before conducting their comparison, their findings would have been very different.

The most widespread example given of such ‘new’ parties here are the various West European Green parties, others include the far-right, immigration based parties, the pensioners’ party in Italy and more recently the referendum parties of Sir James Goldsmith in France and Britain. These parties are certainly not seeking centrist ‘catch-all’ ground and most have little historical precedent. To what extent can autonomist parties be said to be single-issue, new parties of this kind?

Ware provides at least a partial answer to this question in his identification of different party families (taken from von Beyme’s *familles spirituelles*) in European politics. In order of their historic emergence these families are liberal and radical parties, conservative parties, socialist and social-democratic parties, Christian Democratic parties, communist parties, agrarian parties, regional and ethnic parties, right-wing extremist parties and ecology parties. The last three or four of these groups can be argued to represent single interests in the sense that their politics are dominated by one overwhelming topic of concern, and so the fourth of Ware’s conditions is under attack from contemporary developments. This, of course, is by no

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<sup>375</sup> S. M. Lipset & S. Rokkan (ed.) (1967) “Party Systems and Voter Alignments : Cross-National Perspectives” In their opening article of this collection Lipset & Rokkan develop what has come to be known as their ‘freezing hypothesis’ which postulated that the party systems of the observed European democracies were largely the same as those which had existed before the Second World War which were themselves determined by fundamental cleavages - hence contemporary cleavages were ‘frozen’ from previous decades.

means a clean division and one could cite the example of the British Labour Party, which whilst being a 'mass party'<sup>376</sup> revolving around the economic cleavage, could be argued, as could any such 'socialist' party, to represent the single issue of labour. The real difference lies in the degree to which the last three or four party families seem to represent something different from the 'mass' or 'catch-all' parties of the recent European past.

However regional and ethnic parties can be said to be qualitatively different from far-right or ecology parties in the vital sense that they do not seek programmatic change; rather they want systemic change. Thus instead of seeking major policy alterations within the present system, the Scottish National Party and the Northern League want to change the system altogether, a fact admitted by Ware when he says "Regional parties can become anti-system in their pursuit of some form of territorial independence."<sup>377</sup> This implies that the first of Ware's conditions is in danger of falling when one considers the type of party which this thesis is concerned with, for they bring people together not to exercise power within the state but rather to categorically change that state, and, in some cases, to end it. They may then seek to wield power in a new state, but by no means assume this role to be pre-destined, with both being at pains to stress the electoral choices which would be available after institutional reform. The League's disastrous period in the ill-fated Berlusconi government seems to have hardened their resolve to change the whole system of government through secession rather than seek reform from within existing state structures. Both parties' prime aim then can be said to consist of not exercising power within the state, but rather fundamentally altering that state's make-up, although this picture is greatly complicated by the participation of both within national 'party systems' in which they try to extricate as many concessions as

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<sup>376</sup> M. Duverger 'Caucus and Branch, Cadre and Mass Parties' in P. Mair (1990) *op. cit.* pp.37-49.

<sup>377</sup> A.Ware (1996) *op. cit.* p.153.

possible. There is then a two-tier political game occurring in which both the League and the SNP participate and it leads to each party having two different sides which can lead to interpretative confusion and also makes any claim about their fundamental beliefs or ends contestable.

The fact that the parties listed by Ware under the regional and ethnic family range widely from left to right on issues of public ownership and social policy, both when compared with each other and also with themselves over time,<sup>378</sup> reinforces the evidence of Chapters Four and Six which claimed that both the SNP and the League were difficult to pigeon-hole on the left-right ideological spectrum. They rather seem to represent diverse individuals and interests held together by the belief in greater autonomy through institutional reform and vitally have no guarantee of staying together on the day after reform is achieved. It is this tendency to straddle the political spectrum which leads to opponents allegations of ideological diversity. Notwithstanding the SNP's leftward shift to compete more directly with Labour, the latter still uses the jibe of Tartan Tories. In this sense the SNP and the League can be seen to have difficulty in meeting the fifth of Ware's requirements, namely that of representing people with similar beliefs and attitudes - they have one dominant similar belief based on their political identity, but beneath this level may differ markedly on social and economic prescriptions. How do they measure up on the remaining two conditions?

On these two conditions both the Scottish National Party and the Northern League can be said to meet the requirements laid down by Ware in his definition of political parties. Both use legitimate, democratic means in pursuing their reformist ends, actively deploring non-democratic means, and both contest elections at all levels of the state, notwithstanding their desire to reform the state organisation. Indeed both

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid. p. 40 Figure 1.8.

parties play on electoral successes to suggest the tide is turning toward them, such as the League's winning of the mayorship of Milan with Marco Formentini in 1993 or the SNP's by-election success in Perth and Kinross in 1995.

Overall the question of how best to understand the SNP and the Northern League in partisan terms is debatable. Clearly both the Scottish National Party and the Northern League are political parties in the physical sense of participating in electoral politics and viewing the means of change as coming from the ballot box rather than the barrel of a gun. However in terms of political party models, there are clear problems in comparing them with other mainstream parties which accept the constitutional status quo. They do seek to exercise power and represent people with similar beliefs drawn from different societal interests, and in this sense they can be said to be operating in a 'catch-all' fashion, but it is in a very particularist way in that they are seeking to 'catch' a consensus based on one dominant belief and underlying any capture is a radical system shift. How different this is from traditional mainstream parties depends on how one judges the question of identity as opposed to economics, religion or some other such cleavage. Both the SNP and the League are heterogeneous in those they attract and at the extreme their members may have only one belief in common, namely that of fundamentally altering the dominant state's institutions and policy competences. The question of how much territory represents a new schism or political cleavage is one which demands further comparative research. How much aid then are the theories of social movements in understanding the two parties? Herbert Blumer provides a starting point with the following general definition of social movements :

"Social movements can be viewed as collective enterprises to establish a new order of life. They have their inception in a condition of unrest, and derive their motive power on one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, from wishes and hopes for a new scheme or system of living. The career of a social movement depicts the emergence of

a new order of life.”<sup>379</sup>

Certainly both the SNP and the League could be said to fit this description - both have at their heart the aim of introducing a new order driven by dissatisfaction. Blumer goes on to differentiate between general social movements such as the women’s or peace movement, specific social movements which are in the main reform or revolutionary movements and expressive social movements such as religious or fashion movements. He identifies nationalistic movements as not falling clearly into any one prong of this trichotomy, rather, in a conception reminiscent of the different facets highlighted by Melucci and discussed in Chapter Two :

“..nationalistic movements are particularly likely to have (a) mixed character.. most nationalistic movements have a strong revivalist character in which the past of the people is glorified...In such a movement there is not only the creation of an objective, such as the gaining of national autonomy but usually also an idealisation of some past epoch in the lives of the people.”<sup>380</sup>

Again both the SNP and the League look to fit this description with both playing on the past as an important part of their rhetoric - the League’s symbol depicts the mediaeval warrior, Alberto da Guissano, who fought the Emperor Barbarossa’s imperial moves against Lombard cities in the thirteenth century, whilst the SNP sought to make political capital by leafleting outside cinemas showing ‘Braveheart’, an Oscar-winning film about the life of the fourteenth century Scottish Guardian, William Wallace.

It seems then that conceptions of social movements have something to add to our understanding of late twentieth century autonomism. Already mention has been made of the broad concept of the ‘Scottish National Movement’ (as opposed to Party) used to capture the broad acceptance of Scottish distinctiveness, regardless of political disposition. Likewise the League, although operating in a shorter time-scale, can be seen to have invoked a broad sense of Northern identity as the basis for its

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<sup>379</sup> H. Blumer ‘Social Movements’ in S.M. Lyman (ed.) (1995) “Social Movements, Critiques, Concepts, Case-Studies” p. 60.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid. pp.82-83.



reforming project, as Schmidtke makes clear: “..the *Lega* was able to effectively refer to a diffuse idea of Northern culture rather than to a virtually non-existent narrower regional identity.”<sup>381</sup> It is possible to portray the electoral variants of the SNP and League as the most militant versions of broader movements, those who attempt to activate more latent feelings of distinctiveness. Indeed one of the problems for the parties can be differences within a given identity, as Lynch outlines in the Scottish case :

“Since the Scottish National Movement suffers from a weak movement infrastructure, as its individual and organisational supporters have overlapping and conflicting memberships and loyalties, conflict has the potential to fragment and destroy organisations and damage the Scottish National Movement.” <sup>382</sup>

Thus it seems that the concept of social movements can instruct our understanding of autonomous groups in the European Union, at least to an extent. Of course the Scottish National Party and Northern League have crossed their respective electoral Rubicons and so, de facto, participate in their state politics as political parties rather than social movements exerting pressure. However in the broader context of identity needs in modern, complex, intertwined societies in which this thesis has placed both of them, the concept of a movement has explanatory power as Melucci sums up thus:

“The ethno-national movements offer a response to these processes (vacuum of identification). They both continue and break with historical nationalism. They are the final outcome of nation-building and represent one of the most striking cases of persistent exclusion from citizenship.”<sup>383</sup>

This theme of the relationship between contemporary and historical nationalism will be examined in the remainder of this chapter. It will be informed by the conclusion that neither the SNP nor the League represent paradigmatic examples of political parties or social movements, rather they are best seen as hybrids, dominated by the singular pressing concern and broad social base of a movement but manifesting

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<sup>381</sup> O. Schmidtke (1993) ‘The Lega Nord : A Territorial Movement Beyond Regionalism’ p.14.

<sup>382</sup> P. Lynch (1994a) op. cit. p.12.

<sup>383</sup> A. Melucci (1989) op. cit. p.92.

politically as parties and often becoming mired in 'politics as usual' as an inevitable consequence of partisan participation.

#### **7.4 Caledonia and Padania - Different Means to an End**

A key question in looking at Scotland and Northern Italy is the degree to which the end goals of the two groups under consideration are comparable. The central dilemma here concerns the comparability of federalism and nationalism - whether they can be said to represent different sides of the same phenomenon. This question was raised in this thesis before the League's moves toward secession, and the argument being developed of greater similarity than difference can only be strengthened by such a move. The last chapter showed how neither the purported nationalism of the SNP, nor the federalism of the Northern League, is as clearly discernible as one might think from the simple terms themselves, both in the degree to which the goals could be said to shift over time and also the closing width of the gap between the two in terms of powers devolved to the autonomous level within the EU.

The SNP has to be placed in the wider context of the 'Scottish National Movement' to be properly understood, otherwise one risks missing the differing shades of opinion and policy options for Scotland. In its initial years there was no clear commitment to full-scale independence, operating as it was in the protectionist, colonial context of the 1930s. Rather the party's creation in 1934 is best placed in the continuing genesis of the Scottish Home Rule movement from the 1880s through to the 1920s as Richard Finlay sums up :

"The newly created Scottish National Party encompassed elements from all shades of political opinion and it was believed that the existence of such a body vindicated the idea that Home Rule could act as a cohesive force, relying simply on its own momentum to achieve constitutional change."<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> R. Finlay (1994) op. cit. p.252.

'Home Rule' is the crucial phrase here building on the National Party of Scotland's 1928 commitment to 'self-government for Scotland'<sup>385</sup>. The contemporary debate within the SNP between gradualists and fundamentalists illustrates a continued tension over the route to constitutional change which Finlay traces back to the 1940s, although the end result is now much more agreed upon in the shape of independence. The commitment to full-scale independence is portrayed by Finlay as stemming from the SNP's experience in its early decades which taught it that if the other parties were to be brought along even some of the way, it had to take a hard-line position - it can be thought of as a movement forced into partisanship as the best means of applying pressure on other parties more likely to deliver some kind of constitutional reform. Crucially, however, this thesis has shown that with the late 1980's move to the flagship policy of 'Independence in Europe', the SNP has softened its scope considerably; its commitment to the Social Chapter, to joint security policy and potentially to economic and monetary union, mean that an independent Scotland would be far more circumscribed in its powers than the SNP were proposing only a decade ago.

The most obvious difference between the Northern League and the SNP is simply the length of time the respective parties have been around. However even in its far shorter political history, the League has experienced enough internal debate and policy shift to indicate that its federalist stance is far from set in stone. The developments since the League left the Berlusconi government in December 1994 have seen a considerable hardening in stance from the League, culminating in 1996's secessionist platform. This shift was graphically illustrated by the June 1995 establishment of a recall parliament at Mantua at which Bossi called for :

"A Constituent Assembly with strongly represented local interests to redraw the Constitution. This is the last chance history will give us to change the country democratically in a federal sense and to break the chains

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<sup>385</sup> Scottish National Party, (1994b) op. cit. p. 2.

of centralism.”<sup>386</sup>

Bossi explicitly acknowledged that unless the exhausted central state can deliver federalism quickly and so free the North, then “we would have to pursue separation”<sup>387</sup> This type of line harks back to the quasi-secessionist early years of the league phenomenon before the umbrella Northern League was formed and the policy of three macro-regions pursued.

However even in this explicitly federalist phase of the early 1990s the type of devolution sought by the League was a very strong form, with very few residual powers remaining at the level of central government. Instead the locality, the region and Europe were seen as the key levels of government.<sup>388</sup> The architect of the macro-regions idea was Gianfranco Miglio and he made clear his association of federalism with European integration, thus:

“In place of the old ideal of ‘independence’ we had to substitute the most modern model of a ‘federal’ integration, based above all on the free determination of populations and on a consensus continually renewed.”<sup>389</sup>

Thus the federalism sought by the League was of a very strong variety, and moreover, recourse to full separation was the next step if it was not delivered. The 1996 general election saw the League present itself on its own pursuing this ‘deliver or else’ line of argument and Bossi has proposed a referendum in the Northern regions on self-determination, whilst talking of secession.<sup>390</sup> The big problem for the League, as with the SNP, is that they may be out of line with majority opinion, and

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<sup>386</sup> Lega Nord Newspaper op. cit. [No.25, Year XIII, 4th July 1995]p.1.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid. p.2 ‘Free the North! Federalism or Separation’.

<sup>388</sup> As shown in such documents as Lega Nord (1994b) ‘Lega Milano : La Citta vola in Europa’ - a pre-election leaflet which saw the League in Milan specifically target the city’s growing importance in Europe under the League mayor, Marco Formentini.

<sup>389</sup> Miglio (1994) op. cit. - Miglio was a very important policy figure in the League and was portrayed as the intellectual guru of federalism before his acrimonious departure in 1994.

<sup>390</sup> Bossi made the suggestion during the League’s annual rally at Pontida site of Alberto da Guissano’s battle with the Emperor Barbarossa. Bossi also used the occasion to proclaim the “birth of the nation of the north” again illustrating the complexity of terminology involved [Financial Times, 25/3/96, p.3].

the secessionist move may prove to be best interpreted as a negotiating tactic which will allow Bossi to compromise back to federalism.

This section has sought to illustrate the complexity of both party's goals. Neither has a completely static policy position on constitutional end, rather both are shifting in response to political opportunities and opinion. The League's debate is a much younger one than that of the SNP and it faces less explicit competition in terms of other parties committed to devolution, however, given Italy's fractious party politics it is possible to discern quite easily a future scenario in which both separatist and federalist sentiment co-exist in different parties in the North of Italy. Vitally the context of the European Union and the powers it is subsuming to itself and away from the traditional nation-state auspice, means that the difference between a potential federal macro-region of Northern Italy and independent nation-state of Scotland is becoming less real and more rhetorical. Depending on the future direction of integration, the sought after areas of Caledonia and Padania, whether independent or devolved, may both possess similar powers and differ only in the symbolic aspects of independence, if at all.

### **7.5 The Past vs. The Future**

The final issue to be dealt with in this penultimate chapter is the key question of how best to describe and understand the two exponents of late twentieth century autonomism with which this thesis has dealt. The crucial questions here are to what extent they represent a phenomenon from which some general precepts may be drawn, why these movements have garnered such strength at this particular epoch, how they compare with historical theories about separatism and whether there is a need for a new terminology to capture any shifts in the content of their political message, if only for the sake of analytical clarity.



The general question of comparability of both different nations and different terms is central to answering all of these questions. Donald Horowitz provides instructive comment when dealing with the question of separatism and secession:

“Should the terms *separatism* and *secession* be confined to movements aiming explicitly at an independent state or extended to movements seeking any territorially defined political change intended to accord an ethnic group autonomous control over the region in which it resides? Conceived in the latter way, separatism would include ethnic demands for the creation of separate states within existing states or for a broad measure of regional autonomy, short of independence....The often tactical nature of demands, their elasticity, even fickleness, the willingness of independence movements to settle for much less than statehood, and the occasional interest of secessionists in capturing the whole state if that proves possible - all of these argue for an inclusive conception of separatism and secession, terms I shall therefore use interchangeably. Such a conception should embrace movements seeking a separate region within an existing state, as well as those seeking a separate and independent state.”<sup>391</sup>

This is a sentiment with which this thesis concurs - it has sought to illustrate the shifting parameters of separatism and secession in the British and Italian contexts. As for the degree to which any conclusions reached may be generalised, the necessary limitation of this thesis to two case studies of autonomist sentiment in the European Union means that at most they can only be treated as starting points for further research. Obvious examples for further comparison include the Spanish regions of Catalonia and Euskadi and the areas on either side of the Belgian language divide - Flanders and Wallonia. The addition of more case-studies in a comparative context would help to balance Sartori's rider that :

“Case studies sacrifice generality to depth and thickness of understanding ..comparative studies sacrifice understanding - in context and of context - to inclusiveness : one knows less about more.”<sup>392</sup>

Scotland and Northern Italy are not identical cases. Differences can be discerned in their system's degree of political stability, the number of parties competing on similar electoral ground, the ability to influence the legislative centre of the political

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<sup>391</sup> D. Horowitz (1994) op. cit. pp.262-263.

<sup>392</sup> G. Sartori (1994) 'Compare Why & How - Comparing, Miscomparing and the Comparative Method' in M.Dogan & A.Kazancigil (ed.) "Comparing Nations" p.24.

system, the widespread nature of an identity and indeed, for much of this thesis' lifespan, in the headline goals of the movements in question. However despite these differences, this thesis has argued that the genesis, content and goal of the SNP and the Northern League are a suitable topic for comparison and indeed it can be argued that precisely because of initial differences, the eventual comparison and conclusions drawn are more resilient, and with the rider expressed above concerning the need for greater comparative studies, tentative general conclusions may be drawn.

Why then have these two movements come to the fore in a substantive electoral sense in the late twentieth century and not before? At least part of the answer here lies in the successes of the British and Italian nation-states outlined in Chapter Three. Certainly in the age before mass democracy both of these were amply supported by the relevant elites and as the franchise was extended the considerable welfare states put in place by both helped to maintain an approving daily plebiscite. Lindsay Paterson's book shows quite clearly that for much of its history Scotland has enjoyed considerable autonomy within the Union and so had little material motive to question the 'national' settlement involved:

"The politics that affected the daily lives of people in Scotland remained thoroughly Scottish because (they were) emphatically local. The significant conflicts were within Scotland, not against England. Civil society was autonomous from the state, in Scotland as throughout Britain...The Scots could believe that they had won a great bargain because their culture could flourish and their economy could grow. this was their conception of liberty. It is not ours, nor that of nationalism : there was no mass franchise, nor even the nineteenth-century icon, a national parliament. But that does not mean that there was no national independence, nor even that people in general did not endorse the constitutional situation. By European standards, Scottish autonomy was at worst normal, at best actually quite privileged."<sup>393</sup>

The most important point here is that of judging by the standards of the time and Paterson uses this concept to portray the creation of the Scottish Office and its burgeoning role in Scottish civil society as important in maintaining contentment with the Scottish constitutional settlement into the twentieth century with its vastly

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<sup>393</sup> L. Paterson (1994) op. cit p.45.

expanded role for the state in the private sphere through the provision of welfare. It is not that nationalism was not present, rather that concessions were wrought :

“The evolution of the Scottish Office between 1945 and the mid-1970s continued to be conditioned by nationalism...each significant extension of the powers of the Scottish Office was in response to current nationalist campaigning - usually spreading across the political spectrum - whatever the official rhetoric about administrative rationalisation may claim. And, although the campaigns did not achieve their overt goal of a parliament, these changes to the Scottish Office were actual victories.”<sup>394</sup>

It is only in the last few decades that these positive aspects of Union and concessions have come to be seen by increasing numbers to be insufficient to meet the needs of Scotland’s distinctive identity, a shift examined in depth in Chapter Three.

Likewise in Italy there was an immediate concern in the aftermath of Unification with ensuring the nascent nation-state take hold across the whole peninsula - that Italians were ‘made’. The motivation here was within a different context from the partners in British Union, and the principle of granting *de facto* autonomy was buried for a century in favour of strong centralism, as Mack Smith makes clear :

“Setting myth and rhetoric aside, the mass of people had been indifferent to the *Risorgimento*, if not actively hostile, and it was possible for contemporaries to say that no other modern nation had fewer efforts and fewer sacrifices in the cause of patriotism. Hence arose the assumption that a strong and centralised government was required if the nation were to survive.”<sup>395</sup>

Again the lack of previous agitation in the North before the last two decades can be seen to be partially the result of the created nation-state providing a beneficial structure for those in the North, until the Christian Democrat post-war occupation of the state, skewed the state’s interests and much of Italy’s resources towards the South, a process which was fuelled by the now uncovered government corruption to become self-sustaining, as Duggan sums up:

“In the 1860s the Piedmontese had tried...to introduce a sense that the law stood above private interests and ought to be respected and obeyed for the sake of the ‘nation’ or the ‘national’ good. Unfortunately, this ‘nation’ had turned out to be made up of a narrow elite, and seemed to cater primarily to the North. This severely limited the moral authority of the state in the South.

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid p.112.

<sup>395</sup> D. Mack Smith (1971) op.cit. p.273.

After 1945 the DC did nothing to alter this situation; if anything they made it worse. In their concern to keep the Communists at bay and entrench themselves in power, they had turned clientelism into a self-sustaining method of government and thereby reinforced many of the most corrupting and debilitating features of Southern society.”<sup>396</sup>

It is against the backdrop of this corruption and the drain on Northern economic resources which it created that the rise of the Northern League is best set.

The fact that both the parties emerged out of broken down bargains and changes in favourable circumstances was analysed in the context of changing values in Chapter Five. The key question is whether these parties or movements are motivated primarily by material motives or not? For some, such as Ronald Inglehart the decline of the traditional nation-states and their established roles and powers is inextricably linked to the unprecedented economic changes which the developed world have undergone in the last fifty years since the end of the last world war, thus:

“..the decline of nationalism and patriotism among West European publics...can be traced to some of the same factors that give rise to Postmaterialism : the emergence of a public that has become accustomed to economic and physical security, and is less likely to feel threatened by neighbouring peoples. Indeed, the rise of Postmaterialism contributes to this tendency. But the decline of patriotism and nationalism goes beyond the Postmaterialist syndrome, for it also reflects an historical change in West European publics’ orientations toward war - a change that seems linked with the experience of World War II...Finally, the emergence of the European Community institutions has contributed to making the perspective of the nation-state seem outmoded, giving rise to a faint but growing sense of European citizenship.”<sup>397</sup>

However Chapter Five highlighted limitations of simply applying concepts such as ‘post-materialism’ with a broad brush to the movements in question, because there was considerable evidence of the importance of economic, material concerns. Perhaps the best we can say is that contemporary autonomist movements represent unfulfilled Postmaterialists in the sense that once autonomy is achieved and the perceived material disparities are righted then they may come to the fore. However,

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<sup>396</sup> C. Duggan (1994) op. cit. p. 269.

<sup>397</sup> R. Inglehart (1990) op. cit. pp. 408-409.

this is very much a speculative conditional and is further complicated by the context of the European Union whose projects for Economic and Monetary Union are very material in motivation. The complexity and overlap of this problem was captured by Inglehart in his initial book, writing about the Flemish nationalists, but with clear parallels for our current subject matter :

“The *raison d’être* of the nation-state had been to maintain order and defend its people and property against outsiders. such considerations weigh less heavily among the priorities of Post-Materialists. Hence, Post-Materialists are relatively open to a supra-national orientation, but it is possible that their attention may turn inward toward smaller, more cohesive centres of loyalty. In the case of the Flemish nationalists, as we have seen, the Post-Materialists move in *both* directions, simultaneously emphasizing greater autonomy for their ethnic group *and* supporting European integration.”<sup>398</sup>

Whilst we can say that both the SNP and the League benefited from dealigned voters as the traditional, hegemonic parties declined, and that such dealignment has been linked to the rising material living standards of West European democracies, there is no evidence that the parties are post-material and indeed, if anything, they have been shown to play on the economic concerns of voters within their given territorial units. Whether post-material concerns come to the fore will depend on the conditions under which either party wins their demands and must await further research at that time. Thus parties such as the SNP and the League cannot be grouped with movements like the Green parties through a bland assertion of the panacea-like theory of post-materialism. They are complex and heterogeneous phenomena which look back as well as forward and they need to be recognised and studied as such.

How are the SNP and the Northern League then to be understood in terms of the general literature on nationalism? It is the contention of this thesis that several of the dominant theories of nationalism have tended to treat it as too much of a monolithic force. The term ‘nationalism’ has been stretched to accommodate so many different phenomena that there is very little substantive left within it. Some recent writing has started to see a recognition of its limitations, as Alter makes clear:

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<sup>398</sup> R. Inglehart (1977) *op. cit* p.334.



“It is clear that nationalism, so convenient a label and justification for many developments, conceals within itself extreme opposites and contradictions. It can mean emancipation, and it can mean oppression : nationalism, it seems is a repository of dangers and opportunities...it is more appropriate to speak of nationalisms in the plural than of nationalism in the singular.”<sup>399</sup>

Whilst there are still theorists who seek a more hegemonic line, they tend to recognise the diversity of content beyond the conceptual similarities, such as Liah Greenfeld:

“National identity in its distinctive modern sense is, therefore, an identity which derives from membership in a ‘people’, the fundamental character of which is that it is defined as a ‘nation’...(it) is perceived as essentially homogeneous, and the lines of status and class as superficial. This principle lies at the basis of all nationalisms and justifies viewing them as expressions of the same general phenomenon. Apart from it, different nationalisms share little.”<sup>400</sup>

The question which this thesis must answer is to what extent the SNP and the Northern League fit into these changing conceptions. The crux of the issue is the use and active seeking of an identity without the necessary connection with the powers of a nation-state. Whereas the be-all and end-all of nationalists from the iconic fall of the Bastille in 1789 through to the post-war period of colonial liberation was obtaining the control of all powers of a state, both internal and external, contemporary nationalists in Western Europe portray themselves as quite happy to gain partial control, with other functions of government being conducted at a supra-national level. The seeking of autonomy is far from being just a symbolic matter - there would be substantial policy areas won back from the discredited centres, especially in the private and social sphere, but the level of expected control as members of the European Union is much less than at any previous time in the history of nationalism. It is this breakdown in the traditional nexus of ‘nation’ and ‘state’ which begs the question of terminological shift. It is confusing to use the same term ‘nationalism’ to represent historically tangential phenomena - namely, both the manner in which industrialising states came to form nation-states and empires and

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<sup>399</sup> P. Alter (1989) op. cit. p.5.

<sup>400</sup> L. Greenfeld (1992) “Nationalism - Five Roads to Modernity” p.7.

how in the last few decades these formations have started to splinter and break-up.

Touraine suggests a possible solution to this confusion:

“The political process in which we are participating is much less the construction of a European state than the partial de-nationalisation of European countries or their entry into a post-national era.”<sup>401</sup>

Whether post-nationalism is the best term to capture the very different processes at work in contemporary Western Europe is a matter of much debate. It is not proffered as a simple way out of a conceptual muddle but rather as a contribution to the process of classifying and understanding nationalism, for as John Hall makes clear “..no single, universal theory of nationalism is possible. As the historical record is diverse, so too must be our concepts.”<sup>402</sup> This thesis will conclude with an espousal of the ways in which modern nationalism within the EU is specifically different.

## **7.6 Summary**

This chapter has sought to bring together the theory and the practice of contemporary autonomism in Scotland and Northern Italy and to move toward conclusions which will be made specific in the next chapter. It has sought to show that the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League provide valid and fruitful objects of comparison building on the internal analyses of Chapter Six to place them in the wider theoretical context.

It has been argued that the context of the European Union provides a vital difference both in comparing with autonomist parties not within its remit and also when one compares the movements within the Union across time to nationalist predecessors. Against the supranational backdrop a blurring of means and ends can be discerned with the lines between nationalism, regionalism and federalism within an integrated

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<sup>401</sup> A. Touraine (1994) op. cit. p.13.

<sup>402</sup> J. Hall (1993) op. cit. p.1.

Europe becoming increasingly murky. This chapter has also sought to show that the SNP and the League need to be understood as part political party and part social movement. At the very least they are not traditional political parties with their overriding anti-system goals, but nor through their electoral participation can they be said to be classic social movements. They are best understood as hybrids then, both in their form and their content, and much of this hybrid nature can be related to their location within the European Union project and the heterogeneous motives which they capture. The conclusion of this thesis will now try to sum up the exact manner in which this organisation has changed the landscape of autonomism and has effectively made many potential units of territory into autonomous eunuchs before they are even realised.

## CHAPTER EIGHT -

### CONCLUSION

#### 8.1 More Similar than Different?

At the outset of this thesis it was stated that the two parties in this study could not be neatly compartmentalized under the labels 'nationalist' and 'federalist'. The intervening chapters have attempted to provide evidence for the development of this claimed complexity when considering autonomist movements in the contemporary European Union. The constitutional goals of the Scottish National Party and Italian Northern League respectively have been shown not to be fixed, immutable planks of policy. Rather they are part of the weaponry of partisan conflict which shift over time in response to the external political opportunities presented and also in reaction to internal party pressures. Evidence of this has been provided by Alex Salmond's gradualist-orientated leadership of the SNP and, more spectacularly, by Umberto Bossi's conversion during the 1996 Italian election campaign to support of secession for the self-proclaimed 'nation of the North'.<sup>403</sup> Neither of these positions can be taken as definitive policy statements because they are likely to ebb and flow in the future, just as they have done in the recent past. What they do illustrate is exactly how blurred the divisions between devolution, federalism, secession and nationalism have come to be for their prime practitioners in late twentieth century Europe. These labels have to be used very carefully in describing West European autonomist parties, such is the fluidity of their ideologies and overlap between them.

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<sup>403</sup> Bossi has taken to quoting the Scottish rebel, William Wallace, inspired by the film 'Braveheart' about him which has been an international hit and openly compares the League's struggle with that of the Scots "...the great nation of the North (*Nordnazione*) should fight for self-determination from Rome which has been the colonial power for thousands of years (and which treats the Northern Italians) just like those English pigs treat the Welsh and Scots." ['The MacBossi, laird of Lombardy', *The Economist*, 30th March 1996] p.49.

This is not to argue that the Scottish National Party and Italian Northern League are identical parties; far from it. The largest difference between them is the electoral marketplace in which they both compete. Whilst the SNP faces constitutional policy competition from the devolutionist Labour Party and the federalist Liberal Democrats and the unionist Conservatives, the Northern League faces much less explicit competition on the constitutional question, although the aftermath to the 1996 election has seen Romano Prodi's centre-left government talk of some degree of fiscal devolution to ease the North's concerns. This stems partly from the umbrella nature of the league organisation through which it encompasses the majority of autonomous groupings of the different Northern regions, though small rival parties do continue to exist in Lombardy and the Veneto. On the other hand, where the SNP faces an established four-way electoral competition within a majoritarian system, the League faces myriad competitors in a hybrid system. It exploited this system in 1994 through its stand-down candidacy agreement with *Forza Italia*, but in 1996 it decided to adopt a stand-alone tactic which was predicted to mean that it would pay a heavy electoral price.<sup>404</sup> In fact the League emerged from the election having increased its vote in the proportional part of the ballot to 10.1% with a respectable 59 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 10.4% and 27 seats in the Senate.<sup>405</sup> This represented a rise of almost 2% from 1994 under the same electoral system and the League's share of the seats, whilst down on 1994, was far higher than expected largely because of its 39 seats won on the single ballot where it was predicted to struggle between the centre-right and centre-left. In the event it seems that *Forza* voters in the north chose the League over the National Alliance(AN), providing further evidence for the existence of a distinct Northern

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<sup>404</sup> The Financial Times Italian columnist predicted a large decrease in League representation while describing Bossi as "playing the secessionist card, hoping to be the power broker in a hung parliament". [Financial Times, 18/4/96] p.3.

<sup>405</sup> These figures from La Repubblica, 23/4/96, pp.1-23 - in the proportional ballot in the North (see map in Appendix II for regions included in 'the North') the League became the largest party with 20.5% of the vote to Forza Italia's 20.1% and the PDS's 18.6%. These figures rose to between 25% and 30% when looking solely at Lombardy and the Veneto.



identity, since the AN are inextricably linked with images of the South and its fascist heritage, a stark contrast to the resistance myth of the northern part of the peninsula. Bossi, though, was disappointed because the Olive Tree coalition had won enough seats to control both houses, albeit relying on the support of the Refounded Communists in the lower house, and so denied the League the potential to broker a deal. The fact that the League won 39 chamber seats in the first-past-the-post part of the ballot confirmed its presence as a major political force and will ensure its proposals remain part of the reform agenda and indeed the constitutional question has dominated political debate since the April 1996 election.

The League then can be seen to differ markedly from the SNP on the question of electoral success and vitally carries more weight at the 'nation-state' level because of the demographics of the Italian north compared with Scotland's substantial under-population relative to its physical size within the UK. The SNP at its peak after 1974, had 11 members in Westminster and less than 3% of the UK national vote. However, within their own electoral ambits both parties can broadly be said to be around the 20% mark, though with significant regional variations within the areas in which they compete (the League has struggled to reproduce the type of vote it gains in the peripheral areas of the North in the major cities such as Milan, whilst the SNP struggles to overhaul the established Labour dominance across the Central Belt of Scotland). Beyond the obvious differences then, imposed by differing political histories and electoral competition, the thesis has sought to show that the parties under consideration have much in common. Chapter Six used various data sources to argue that similarities could be drawn between the parties in terms of constitutional end, anti-centralism, ideological fluidity, attitudes toward Europe, the use of identity and the rhetoric of campaigning. To a lesser extent Chapter Five drew similarities in the profile of voters who support each party. It is important that these two parties which have been associated with different party family groups and their related

attributes, have been shown to share many similarities. This thesis argues that many of the differences between the two are nominal only dictated largely by the political systems in which they compete. Much of the substance is comparable and provides instruction in beginning to understand the complexity of contemporary autonomist movements in the European Union and the changing content of labels such as nationalism or regionalism within that organisation's auspices.

The difficulties highlighted by the thesis in pinning down either party at a particular point on the ideological spectrum were well captured in the 1996 Italian election. Data collected by the Italian magazine 'Panorama' on electoral flows between 1994 and 1996 showed the league to have the equal highest voter loyalty between the two elections of 75% along with the centre-left PDS and the right-wing National Alliance. More significantly, when it came to the remaining 25% of 1996 League voters, 4% came from Berlusconi's Forza Italia exactly the same figure as defected from the left-wing Greens, only 1% came from the National Alliance, the same figure as moved to the League from the Refounded Communists, whilst 8% came from the parties of the centre.<sup>406</sup> Such figures, when allied to the data reported in Chapter Five suggest that it is hard to sustain any picture of the League as right-wing organisation. However, this image remains both in Italy and abroad, buoyed by such simplistic equivocations of the League with Mussolini as offered in The Scotsman's leader column in reaction to Bossi's calls for an independent Padania in the election's aftermath:

"A much more constructive way forward (not only for Italy) is to make progress towards regional structures and the decentralisation of power by means which do not require the establishment of groups like the Northern League's own green shirted security force - an ominous reminder of the black shirts."<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> These figures are based on research by Paolo Natale and Nando Pagnocelli who used interviews conducted with 2,500 voters by the Abacus Survey group on the 20th & 21st of April [Panorama, 2/5/96] p.27.

<sup>407</sup> The Scotsman 'Secession is not an option for Italy' [13th May 1996] p.12.

The reaction in Italy to Bossi's post-election manoeuvres has seen both the Church and the armed forces condemning his setting-up of the Committee for the Liberation of Padania and President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro has openly questioned the constitutional validity of any project which questions Italian national unity.<sup>408</sup> Bossi has also launched a 'shadow government' which has ten members under Giancarlo Pagliarini and will meet at and be accountable to the recall parliament in Mantua<sup>409</sup>. He has invoked the peaceful divorce of Czechoslovakia in 1993 as the model for Padania leaving Italy and repeatedly pointed out that the League's secessionist stance gained the largest electoral endorsement in northern Italy in the 1996 election. This position can be interpreted in pragmatic terms with Bossi refusing to rule out a federal compromise at the same meeting at which the Padanian government was announced.<sup>410</sup> The point here is that on both the question of the left-right partisan spectrum and the question of constitutional change within or outwith existing boundaries, the League can be said to exhibit chameleon-like properties. It has shifted its constitutional stance markedly in the course of the 1990s and in this can be said to mirror many features of the SNP albeit over a longer period of time. As Chapter Four showed a comparison of the SNP in the first three decades of its history and the following three decades from the mid-1960s shows two very different organisations both in terms of what was being sought and electoral success; likewise the SNP was certainly not seen as the type of left-wing party which it now portrays itself as up until the mid-1980s. The changes may be more spread out in chronological terms but they are definitely similar trends worth comparing substantively. Thus beyond the systemic and political culture differences highlighted earlier, this thesis has sought to show that there are several parallels between the Scottish National Party and the Northern League worthy of the specific examination

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<sup>408</sup> See *Corriere Della Sera* special on 'La Questione del Nord' [7/5/96] pp.4-5.

<sup>409</sup> See *La Repubblica* 'Padania, governo-bis' [13/5/96] p.1.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.* 'Bossi si fa il suo governo' pp.2-3.

undertaken herein and it contends that these parties, both situated within the late twentieth century European Union are indeed more similar than different.

## **8.2 The European Bonfire of the Autonomies**

A vital theme of this thesis has been the context provided by the European Union. This organisation represents a pooling of sovereignty unprecedented in the history of nation-states. The argument that current controversies over the direction of integration may see a diminution of Europe's powers cuts little ice when placed against the history of the Community and Union. The organisation has proved itself able to weather previous disputes and vitally has been able to outlive obstructionist national leaders, from General Charles De Gaulle through to Margaret Thatcher and most recently the beef-inspired John Major. At the very least the current policy competences of the Union can be expected to endure, and thirteen of the fifteen current members favour further integration in spheres such as monetary policy and defence, previously reserved as monopolies of power for the nation-state (only Denmark and the UK have opt-out clauses). The United Kingdom is the current exception to this group, but if the Major administration is ousted at the next general election, the attitude of an incoming Labour government would seem likely to be markedly different on social policy and more open to debate on issues of security and monetary integration.

In this sphere both the Scottish National Party and the Northern League are noteworthy for their pro-European stance. In the former's case Chapter Six showed this to be a large policy reversal from a previously very hostile attitude, and the special conference held in Perth at the end of April 1996 at which EMU was discussed showed how deep the commitment to Europe runs with Alex Salmond reaffirming the SNP as 'an unashamedly pro-European party (who) are sympathetic

to the idea of a single currency but (who) want to judge at the time when all the facts are known.”<sup>411</sup>, albeit with the emergence of some grass-roots doubts over membership of the potential European single currency.<sup>412</sup> The League has had a less chequered history, due to the much wider acceptance in Italy of the pooling of sovereignty associated with the European project. The League is as committed as the SNP to European integration and the extension of joint decision-making, as Bossi makes clear:

“..the new Europe must be united and federal, because the socio-economic destiny of the continent is moving in that direction. History teaches us that the economic structure has always guided the institutional infrastructure towards the most rational solution...those who talk of new frontiers have understood nothing, because the League sees the future of Europe as one of increasing integration.”<sup>413</sup>

The League’s explicit and immediate worry over the Italian South preventing the prosperous North from being a part of the central core of Europe was made clear in the manifesto for the 1996 elections:

“The Northern League considers Europe as the important cornerstone of its political action. The unitary ‘nation-state’ constitutes a relic which is more at home in the past. It is, on the one hand, too small to respond to the demands of regulating the economy or the environment and too large to reply to the demands of accountability...it is vital to avoid the exclusion of Padania from the institutionalisation of an ‘inner core’ which become intimately linked ..any ‘Europe of variable geometry’ must not be rigidly based on member states.”<sup>414</sup>

The worry of Northern Italy being excluded from Europe’s inner integrating core has been seen to be a powerful motivating factor for the League and its support. An integrated Europe does not aim to abolish the member-states’ governments but it does want to create more areas of collective decision-making. The vital consideration in this matter is the possible extension of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) across

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<sup>411</sup> [Scotland on Sunday, 28/4/96] p.2.

<sup>412</sup> The former SNP leader Gordon Wilson and Alex Neil’s call for the SNP to commit to a referendum on Scottish participation in a single currency by amending the motion proposed by Allan Macartney MEP which “would place the SNP in the position of backing more qualified majority voting in Europe with Scotland only retaining a veto over treaty amendments.” [The Scotsman, 5/4/96 p.6] was accepted at the special national conference in Dundee.

<sup>413</sup> Lega Nord (1993) op. cit. pp.55-56.

<sup>414</sup> Lega Nord (1996) ‘Programma Elettorale per la Padania - Elezioni Politiche Del 21 Aprile 1996’ [Lega Nord Official World Wide Web site, accessed 1/5/96].



all three policy pillars defined in the Treaty on European Union (TEU), namely extending its remit from the community affairs pillar across the security and defence policy one and into the justice and home affairs pillar. If this occurs it effectively removes the residual right of national veto, so zealously guarded by the Council of Ministers between the 1960s and the 1980s as the ultimate guarantor of national sovereignty. It is interesting to note that these *Accords de Luxembourg* never had constitutional status; rather it was through habit that the second point of the communiqué came to be interpreted as providing a national veto with its concession that where 'very important interests' are in question unanimity would be sought. It is important that the national veto was not part of the founding treaty and it was for this reason that the Single European Act could extend qualified majority voting across many new policy areas. Any formal extension of majority voting would extend into new policy spheres the EU's collective remit with the European Court as final arbiter, which would have large implications for national jurisdiction given the accepted supremacy of European law, highlighted by Steiner:

"....in a relatively short space of time the courts of member States, despite their different constitutional rules and traditions, have adapted to the principle of supremacy of EEC law. Credit for their accepting this principle must go to the European Court, which has supplied persuasive reason for doing so."<sup>415</sup>

What are the implications of such integration for autonomist movements within the Union? This thesis has shown how both the Scottish National Party and the Northern League especially with its commitment to secession from the end of March 1996<sup>416</sup>, aim to create autonomous governing units within the European Union. However there is an inherent paradox in this aim, for given the policy competences which both parties are pledged to give up to Brussels, the question must be asked - what exact spheres of policy will remain for the newly autonomous Scottish or Padanian

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<sup>415</sup> J. Steiner (1992) "Textbook on EEC Law" p.53.

<sup>416</sup> Bossi proclaimed the birth of the nation of the North at the traditional rally of Pontida claiming "A nation is being born, the Padanian nation, and when we vote for its constitution there will be no turning back" [La Repubblica, 25/3/96] p.1.

parliaments? They may be 'nation-states' in name but judging by current policy commitments they would bear little resemblance to any historical or traditional model of nation-statehood.

The scenario suggested in Chapter Seven of autonomous eunuchs provides a very stark contrast with the grand aspirations of nineteenth and early twentieth century nationalists. The scope of powers to be gained is very much more limited due to international obligations and constraints. Both the SNP and the League place much faith in the notion of subsidiarity, which as the first chapter observed is very much a contested concept, and in institutions such as the Committee of the Regions (although this body has purely consultative powers as yet, it is seen as a forum for pressing regional matters). However it is difficult to avert the criticism that to a certain extent both parties are replacing the rule of London or Rome with that of Brussels and interviews with activists of both parties revealed considerable concerns over their respective parties' Europhile stance as Chapter Six made clear. The autonomists may well have their own 'seat at the table', but this counts for less in the absence of an active national policy veto and as the Union expands to the east 'the table' is becoming bigger, making it more difficult for any individual voice to be heard.

The difference in this stance with that of traditional nationalism and the consequent need to differentiate between types of nationalism is captured by Michael Keating:

“..the peripheral nationalisms of developed western societies represent attempts to come to terms with the changing constellation of power and to reconstitute politics on a territorial basis which is legitimated historically but which can be used to confront contemporary political and economic realities. One aspect of this...is the acceptance of continental integration. Large state nationalists have been hostile to this, fearing the loss of sovereignty and domestic control over policy. The new minority nationalisms have a view of sovereignty which is highly attenuated by the recognition of interdependence and the limitations of the nation-state. The question is how to insert themselves into the new continental and global order...Some represent classic forms of nationalism, aiming at the creation of new nation-states. Others, those of interest here, are post-nation-state in

inspiration, addressing a world in which sovereignty has ceased to be absolute and power is dispersed...This gives a new meaning both to the idea of the nation and to the nationalist project. Nationalist discourse is modernist and concerned with development and adaptation rather than antiquarianism and looking to the past. It accepts the limits of sovereignty and searches for ways in which self- government may be made effective and a project for national self-assertion mounted, in the absence of the classical nation-state."<sup>417</sup>

There is then a clearly discernible contrast between the defensive nationalism of the traditional 'nation-staters' as one could term the Conservative Euro-sceptics and those seeking some form of autonomy below this established state level, such as the Scottish National Party or Northern League, who view Europe in a much more favourable and opportunistic way. A large question, which it must be left to further research to determine if and when the parties under consideration achieve their goal, is to what extent they then change their attitude toward a more defensive outlook. Such an analysis would help form a clearer picture of the extent to which fulfilled nationalism was motivated by different concerns and impeti in contrast to unfulfilled nationalists whose rhetoric and arguments have been examined so far, for it could be argued to be far easier to give up theoretical powers which one doesn't possess, than tangible powers which are actually possessed.

### **8.3 Sub & Supra-Nationalism**

The new conditions imposed by the European Union create a vastly different context for contemporary nationalist, federalist and regionalist movements. The content of the different terms have been changed irrevocably by the globalising developments of the last few decades. Gone are the days of the nation-state holding the key to international power and prestige. A vital change in modern nationalism lies in the question of exactly what form of state is being sought - the definite connection

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<sup>417</sup> M. Keating (1996) "Nations Against the State - The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland" [MacMillan, 1996] p. 53.

between 'nation' and 'state' has become contested and within the European Union can be said to have changed aspirations and goals, as Kellas makes clear:

"All types of nationalism seek a political expression for the nation, most strongly in independent statehood. Nationalists may settle for less, however. They may be content for the nation to be a unit in a federal state or to have devolution in a unitary state."<sup>418</sup>

This idea of different gradations of nationalism co-existing, rather than there being one absolute and monolithic paradigm is supported by the evidence marshalled in this thesis concerning the fluid nature of both parties stated aims and the overlapping identities and constitutional desires unearthed in the secondary data. There is no definitive answer to the question of any identity - rather both Scotland and Northern Italy show a complex layering of different identities of which different strands may be given salience at different times. The data and research conducted do suggest that anyone who talks of either a 'British' or 'Italian' identity as dominant is on very slippery terrain with clear problems for either of these in mounting any claim to hegemony. This should not come as a surprise after the analysis of Chapter Three which showed that neither 'nation-state' was ever as hegemonic as supposed. Rather for much of their unitary histories bargains were struck which 'absorbed' sub-state differences, but vitally did not preclude their continued existence. It is with the breakdown of these bargains and compromises that the politicisation of these sub-national identities can be explained over the last few decades. This thesis argues that this change is inextricably linked to the growing globalisation and concomitant integration of sovereign states which has been witnessed since the Second World War and which was expounded in Chapter Two.

The sub and supra-national developments outlined in previous chapters cannot be understood if they are treated simply as hermetically sealed events; rather they are intertwined and betray a common theme of greater dependence. It is a dependence

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<sup>418</sup> J. G. Kellas (1991) op. cit. p.3.

which has seen many traditional states unable to fulfil their gelling function in a manner as of old and a dependence which has seen the horizons of the new autonomists significantly alter from their nation-state building predecessors. This decline of state power has occurred in many different fields of government activity. There has been a globalisation of culture which has served to complement the concurrent moves to a more global economic market. Thus state-run media is on the retreat, in the same way as protectionism and economic closure have become outdated in the context of free-trade areas and global moves to freer trade through the World Trade Organisation (the successor to the GATT) have developed, albeit in fits and spurts, with the League and the SNP's commitment to free trade being one of the most obvious differences from previous nationalists. Concurrently the period since the Second World War has seen security issues become much more collective under organisations such as NATO and the WEU. In Western Europe all of these changes have been supplemented by the incremental integration of the European Union to create a situation in which an inward-looking autarkic state would be very unlikely to prosper (even the likes of Norway and Switzerland have close free-trading links with their European neighbours, notwithstanding their adherence to neutrality and lack of institutional link). The overall environment is one that is hugely altered from the conditions facing nationalist and regionalist parties a matter of decades ago. It is important to stress the separate notions of 'nation' and 'state' in this process - just as they were conjoined by historical circumstance, they can now be said to be unravelling and this process can be seen as offering new opportunities, as Keating says:

"In the late twentieth century... the state is retreating in some spheres and has lost its monopoly in others. This has serious consequences for the nation-state but differing impacts on the idea of the nation itself. In so far as the nation is identified with the state, then any weakening of the latter entails a weakening of the former. If national identity is rooted in civil society, on the other hand, the retreat of the state may not prejudice it. It may, however, permit the reassertion of other forms of national identity and mobilisation not associated with the existing states and the assertion of claims of dual or



This last point is one which was examined in relation to opinion poll data and activist interviews in previous chapters. It is again evidence of the linkage to what one can term the ‘localisation’ of nationalist politics. The power auspices sought by contemporary autonomist parties for themselves largely concern social issues such as education, health, housing and the key battleground of welfare with issues such as trade, and to a growing extent monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policy devolved upwards to the supranational level, along with issues such as security, immigration and borders. In other words the policy spheres of the traditional state are becoming increasingly impinged upon or at least contested. The resolution of this conflict will differ depending on interpretations of the notion of subsidiarity but the fact that many of the conflicts are replicated in different ‘national’ arenas shows the degree of conflict which can be highlighted within the European Union and the linkage between trends at the sub- and supra-national level.

A central argument of this thesis has concerned the blurring of boundaries between the previously more segmented spheres of ‘regionalism’ and ‘nationalism’, the former operating within state boundaries and the latter seeking to overturn these frontiers. The use by the League of a secessionist platform in the 1996 Italian general election can be seen as clear confirmation of the confused demarcations between the concepts of regionalism and nationalism which exist if one tries to define them as mutually exclusive. Bossi’s moves may well be tactical but they nonetheless are indicative of the thinning line between the two. The approach of this thesis is to employ a broader definition of nationalism which recognises and encompasses the changes which have occurred over the last quarter of a century. This definition no longer demands of nationalism that it must necessarily seek a ‘nation-state’; instead

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<sup>419</sup> M. Keating (1996) *op. cit.* p.24.

its proponents may be happy within existing territorial bounds if there is a substantive redistribution of policy competences. The fact that the League attracted one in ten votes amongst all Italians in the 1996 election whilst proposing a break-up of the unitary Italian state, through the establishment of an independent state of Padania, is significant. It flies in the face of those commentators who predicted the demise of the League at this election, squeezed between the competing centre-left and centre-right blocs borne of the unitary Italian state's new hybrid electoral system. The League cannot be lightly dismissed as a flash, protest party which benefited from the collapse of the old order; it has endured and has grown into the most preferred party of Northern electors. Indeed for Ilvo Diamanti, commenting on the 1996 election in *La Repubblica* :

“The League has gained advantage from the fact that, whilst the other political forces have been modernising themselves and shedding their ideologies, it has remained the last of the old mass parties, with its ideological base, its hard-core support and its ability to mobilise itself...the wind of secession may well become unstoppable.”<sup>420</sup>

This raises the question of whether or not the current crop of autonomist parties should be viewed as subcultural in the sense of specifically creating a political belonging through a new cleavage or whether they are simply instrumental means toward a particular constitutional end? This is a question which undoubtedly requires further research. What can be said is that it is surely no coincidence that many areas are witnessing similar conflicts based on similar renascent or reactivated identities. A wide comparison of Scotland, Padania, Catalonia, Euskadi, Wallonia and beyond to Quebec would be instructive in starting to answer these questions. This section has argued that there is a link between the macro and micro pictures and to some extent the same processes which have led to burgeoning international links can be argued to have raised the import of territory in previously, at least superficially, settled polities. The desire to answer the questions and demands of populations in different ways can

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<sup>420</sup> *La Repubblica*, 23/4/96, p.11.

be seen to contribute to the rise of autonomist politics, though it is not all idealistically motivated by notions of democracy and accountability. As Chapter Five argued much of the impetus must be seen through the prism of the potential wealth of the area in question. The ability of the traditional nation-states to meet the new demands does seem to have been dissipated and a key question in the ongoing genesis of autonomism is the degree to which they can adjust and answer this failing. That this question takes place within the parameters of the supra-national European Union will very much effect the responses of the old states and as has been seen greatly influences the approach of the sub-national actors.

#### **8.4 Summary**

The key theme of this thesis then has been the degree to which old certainties and established theories need considerable revision in the light of developments in a European Union now approaching its fortieth birthday. The degree to which definitions of nationalism, federalism, regionalism and the like can be sustained as rigidly exclusive has been challenged by the blurring of old 'nation-state' demarcations. This blurring is reflected in the fluidity captured in the two parties under explicit consideration. Thus whilst the internal differences between the SNP's old anti-Europe autarky and its late 1980's 'Independence in Europe' platform or the League's shift from three federal macro-regions within Italy to an independent Padania are central to the domestic political debates, the very ease of flow from one position to another and the substantial overlap between the different stances in terms of relations with the European Union mean a very different conception of nationalism needs to be embraced if we are to understand the trends at work.

The old nation-state is not dead but it has been severely buffeted by the many factors outlined in this thesis. It has been stressed that the conjoining of 'nation' and 'state'

to create the paradigmatic sovereign entity of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is by no means a 'natural' unit of government. It has come to be the norm over the last two hundred years, but itself may come to be supplanted. Nowhere is this trend more evident than in Europe and it can be argued that the ire of those who oppose European integration stems from a recognition of the potential historical weight of the project. The shifts are captured well by Malcolm Anderson in discussing the most symbolic of nation-state divides - the question of frontiers:

"In recent history, the international frontier has delimited the sovereign state, a political form which originated in western Europe and spread to all inhabited regions. The clarity of the state frontier is now fading because the exercise of sovereign authority in certain domains is becoming either very difficult or impossible. The increased permeability of international frontiers is both a symptom and a cause of radical change in the characteristics and environment of the state. This change is most evident in Europe...European integration lacks genuine historical antecedents. It is quite unlike state-building in early modern Europe and the drive towards national self-determination in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."<sup>421</sup>

It is this conceptual and empirical novelty which this thesis has tried to capture through the study of two variants of contemporary autonomism within the EU. It has been argued that these movements share many notable features despite their different historical and political contexts. Both can be shown to illustrate the paradox thrown up by their existence within Europe, namely the degree to which their long-sought autonomy from their respective nation-states, if and when it is achieved will be replaced by integration within a Europe with aspirations to play a role in almost all areas of policy traditionally reserved for the nation-state and it is this potential encroachment which the term European Unionists seeks to capture. The question which the analysis contained herein begs is the extent to which this shift needs to be recognised terminologically by the embracing of a concept such as 'post-nationalism', which simply signifies the substantial changes which are currently happening to nationalism in Western Europe. This question is for future research and

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<sup>421</sup> M. Anderson (1996) "Frontiers - Territory and State Formation in the Modern World" p.178.

most importantly actual developments to decide. It is, however, important to note the trends and events of change which have challenged many parts of the received political wisdom on nationalism and if this term itself is retained to describe movements such as the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League, then it is imperative that the different content of nationalism in the contemporary EU context is well noted. It is hoped that this thesis has made a contribution to this process.



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## **APPENDIX I : INTERVIEW COMMENTARY & QUESTIONS**

### **COMMENTARY**

Conducting twenty-eight interviews with activists in the Scottish National Party and the Italian Northern League proved a very instructive process, both from an academic and personal point of view. Intellectually I was pleased to gather data which helped me argue that despite the obvious differences between the two movements, many of those convinced enough of their arguments to get actively involved, had large similarities in motive and goal. Personally the whole process taught me how patient one must be in awaiting replies from potential interviewees and how careful one must be in the wording of questions, a couple of misplaced words can lose the whole intended effect of a question.

In general the interviews lasted about thirty minutes although one of the older SNP activists used up a whole sixty minute tape, whilst a monosyllabic League supporter produced less than twenty minutes. Two pilot interviews were conducted in December 1994 in Scotland which led to a few questions being dropped as they were obviously going to be answered as part of other questions. The bulk of the fieldwork was then carried out in Scotland in Glasgow in March and Edinburgh in May and in Italy in July and August of 1995 in Vicenza, Verona and Brescia. In addition two top-up interviews with women were held in Edinburgh in October of 1995 to right a gender imbalance - I had to actively seek out SNP women. The most time-consuming process by far was the transcription of the interviews which I did myself in the late summer of 1995. However I believe that the long hours spent listening and typing were some of the most crucial in formulating the thesis because the stream of thoughts and ideas which I had during transcription was unequalled at any other stage of the research.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the whole interview process was the degree of self-selection involved. At the outset I wrote to SNP branches in Glasgow Govan, Aberdeen North, Peterhead and Perth & Kinross but only the first of these offered their co-operation and so I then used a contact in Edinburgh to arrange more interviews. The Northern League were much friendlier - I think I benefited from the 'flattering factor' of a foreign student being interested enough to come to Italy and talk to them and the only place I didn't get a reply from was Milan. I conducted seven interviews in the Veneto and seven in Lombardy to try and get a flavour of the diversity between these two regions within the Northern League's umbrella.



Obviously a total of twenty-eight interviews is nowhere near enough to found any major theories upon, but this was never the intention of the interviews. They were an important part of an integrated research design and my intention was to use them to illustrate points made based on literature and other data sources such as opinion polls or party literature. I see them comprising a snapshot of party sentiment during a particular year, any comments and comparisons made on specific questions will be intended not as definitive statements but rather as exploratory routes which may be followed up or left to be disproved by further research. The major resource which I could have used was simply assistance, the time involved in organising, conducting, transcribing and reacting to a body of twenty-eight interviews certainly came as a surprise to me. There were some dark days of transcription when it seemed a never ending process and one wished that people didn't ramble on so much but overall I would say I found the whole process very invigorating, it is very much my piece of research from start to finish and there is a great buzz to hearing people say what one anticipated they might say.

Before doing them the biggest problem apparent in the proposed interviews was the degree of consistency which could be obtained when using two different languages. I decided that to maximise the reliability of interviews conducted in English and Italian it was salient to use highly structured interviews in which the questions were virtually straight translations. I was aware that too structured an approach could create artificial answers simply from the expectations created by my questions. Thus in the end the interviews were fairly highly structured, I had a list of questions which were identical in both languages and these formed the core of the process, but if the interviewee said something which was worth pursuing I was prepared to follow this line and then return to the structured interview - an approach which I believe has provided for comparison between the two sets of data without constraining its content to an unacceptable degree.

The activists of the SNP and the League provide the link between the above and below between their parties and the electorate. Of course one expects them to be committed and to hold stringent viewpoints because otherwise they may no longer be active members. However their opinions are still valid since they represent people that the parties have convinced of their message and in turn want to convince others, they are the most committed voters and most frequently targeted group for interview, since it would be very difficult to target say particular voter groups without the

backing of a big polling organisation. It is my opinion that interviews with such activists can provide a very fruitful terrain for research. The process is time-consuming but for me it ultimately proved to be time well spent and certainly provided me with one of the most enjoyable parts of the research undertaken.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **Basic Information /Dati Essenziali**

How old are you?

*Quanti anni ha Lei?*

Where were you born?

*Dove e nato Lei?*

Where were you brought up?

*Dove si e cresciuto?*

Where were your parents and grand-parents born and brought up?

*Dove sono nati e si sono cresciuti i Suoi genitori e i Suoi nonni?*

What is your current occupation? Have you had different jobs before?

*Che lavoro fa Lei a questo punto? Lei aveva i lavori differenti nel passato?*

When did you join the SNP?

*Quando si e iscritto alla Lega?*

When did you become involved as an activist?

*Quando ha cominciato il Suo coinvolgimento come un attivista?*

Why did you become involved as an activist?

*Perche ha cominciato il Suo coinvolgimento come un attivista?*

Have you ever, in the past, been a member of other political parties? Your parents?

*Nel passato si e mai iscritto in altri partiti politici? I Suoi genitori?*

### **Motives /Motivi**

Why did you join the party when you did?

*Perche si e iscritto quando l'ha fatto?*

Have you ever questioned this decision? Are your reasons for membership still the same?

*Lei ha mai dubitato di questa scelta? Le Sue ragioni sono ancora le stesse?*

Have you been pleased in , disappointed with or indifferent to the tangible changes achieved by your party since you have been a member?

*I cambiamenti tangibili che il Suo partito ha realizzato da quando si e iscritto , glieli sono piaciuti, non glieli sono piaciuti o e rimasto indifferente?*

Had London been more accommodating to the demands of Scotland, do you think you would have still joined the party? Would you be involved to the same degree?

*Se Roma avrebbe accolto piu le domande del Nord, Lei sarebbe ancora iscritto in partito? E il Suo coinvolgimento sarebbe il stesso?*

How much has the experience of other autonomist movements influenced your activism? Which models of autonomy do you look to as a prototype?

*Quanto l'esperienza degli altri movimenti autonomisti ha influenzato il Suo attivismo? Che sono i modelli d'autonomia che servono bene come prototipo?*

Do you see your party's demands as primarily economic?

*Le richieste del Suo partito, secondo Lei, sono soprattutto quelle economiche?*

Would Scotland be richer with the type of autonomy proposed by your party?

*Il Nord sarebbe piu ricco con l'autonomia che il Suo partito ha proposto?*

### Myths /Miti

Do you see yourself as Scottish, not British; more Scottish than British; equally Scottish and British; more British than Scottish; British, not Scottish?

*Lei si sente come settentrionale solo, non italiano; piu settentrionale che italiano; sia settentrionale che italiano; piu italiano che settentrionale; o italiano solo, non settentrionale?*

Do you see Scotland as different from the rest of Britain?

*Lei vede il Nord come differente delle altre regioni dell'Italia?*

If so, in what specific ways?

*Se ha detto si, in quali modi specifici?*

Would you say these differences derive from a different identity?

*Per Lei, queste differenze direvano da un'identita differente?*

Do you see this Scottish identity as an unique entity?

*Lei vede questa identita settentrionale come un'entita unica?*

How long has this distinctiveness existed?

*Per quanto tempo e esistata questa caratteristica?*

Does the distinctiveness outlined have any ethnic base?

*Questa caratteristica ha una base etnica?*

### Methods /Metodi

What kind of Scotland would you like to see?

*Che tipo di Nord vorrebbe vedere?*

What do you see as the most effective way to achieve tangible autonomy for Scotland?

*Quale pensa che sia il modo piu efficace per ottenere un'autonomia tangibile per il Nord d'Italia?*

What form would this autonomy take? Is it an end or a means to a further end?

*Che forma avrebbe quest'autonomia? C'e un fine o un mezzo per un'altro fine?*

How do you react to the prospect/reality of alliance with other parties who are also competitors?

*Come Lei reagisce alla prospettiva/ alla realta di un'alleanza con altri partiti che sono anche avversari?*

What do you think of Settler Watch/Scotland Watch?

Do you feel you have an influence/input on SNP policies and direction?

*Le sembra che Lei abbia un'influenza sulla linea politica e sulla direzione della Lega?*

Has the SNP shifted its stance over time?

*La Lega ha cambiato posizione nella sua storia?*

Why were these changes made?

*Perche sono fatti questi cambiamenti?*

Did you agree with them?

*Lei e stato d'accordo con questi?*

Would you consider a devolved/federal settlement as a reason to lessen or heighten your activism in the party?

*Considererebbe un'assetto federale come una ragione per aumentare o diminuire il Suo attivismo nel partito?*

### **Others / Altri**

How unified or divided would you say the party currently is? And in the past?

*A questo punto, secondo Lei, il partito e unito o diviso? E nel passato?*

Do the different factions within the party each get an equal hearing?

*Le differenti tendenze nel partito hanno un peso uguale?*

What of the criticism that your party's policy will simply replace the shackles of London with those of Brussels?

*Come Lei risponde alla critica che con la linea politica del Suo partito il centralismo di Brusselle semplicemente sostituira quello di Roma?*

*Quanta importanza hanno avuto le riforme regionali degli anni settanta?*

Where do you see yourself situated on the following linear scale?

I-----I  
Scottish British

Why did you choose this position?

*Dove si vede sulla linea seguita?*

I-----I  
Settentrionale Italiano

*Perche Lei ha scelto questo luogo?*

Do you think that the characteristics of nationalism have changed over the last few years?

*Secondo Lei le caratteristiche del nazionalismo hanno cambiato negli ultimi anni?*

Is the international environment a help or a hindrance to your party?

*La comunita internazionale aiuta o ostacola il Suo partito a questo punto ?*

Have you heard of the Northern League? What is your opinion of them?

*Ha sentito parlare del partito nazionale scozzese? Che ne pensa?*

Do you have any further comments or questions?

*Lei ha altri commenti o altre domande?*



(Source : EU Map of Member States, Regions and Administrative Units, 1995)

(Source : EU Map of Member States, Regions and Administrative Units, 1995)

